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(54) **METHODS OF IDENTIFYING MODULATORS OF BITTER TASTE USING HT2R50 RECEPTORS**

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(51) **Int. Cl.**

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(52) **U.S. Cl.** **435/7.1; 435/7.2; 435/7.21; 435/7.31; 435/7.32; 435/29; 436/501**

(58) **Field of Classification Search** None
See application file for complete search history.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

The present invention relates to the discovery of a novel haplotype of the human taste receptor hT2R50 in the T2R taste receptor family that responds to particular bitter ligands, i.e., 2-acetylpyrazine and ethylpyrazine. The present invention also relates to the use of this novel haplotype in assays for identifying ligands that modulate the activation of the hT250 taste receptor. These compounds potentially may be used as additives in foods, beverages and medicinals for modifying (blocking) hT2R50-associated bitter taste.

25 Claims, 2 Drawing Sheets

DNA AND PROTEIN SEQUENCES FOR hTR50L**CODING DNA SEQUENCE:**

ATGATAACTTTTCTGCCATCATATTTTCCATTCTAGTAGTGGTTACATTTGTTATTG
 GAAATTTTGCTAATGGCTTCATAGCGTTGGTAAATTCACCGAGTGGGTGAAGAGACA
 AAAGATCTCCTTTGCTGACCAAATTGTCACCTGCTCTGGCGGTCTCCAGAGTTGGTTG
 CTCTGGGTGTTATTATTAATTTGGTATTCAACTGTGTTGAATCCAGCTTTTGTAGTG
 TAGAATTAAGAACTACTGCTTATAATATCTGGGCAGTAACCGGCCATTTTCAGCAACTG
 GCCTGCTACTAGCCTCAGCATATTTTATTTGCTCAAGATTGCCAATTTCTCCAACCTT
 ATTTTCTTCGCTTAAAGAGGAGAGTTAAGAGTGTCAATCTGGTGATGCTGTTGGGGC
 CTTTGCTATTTTGGCTTGTCACTTTTGTGGTAAACATGAATCAGATTGTATGGAC
 AAAAGAATATGAAGGAAACATGACTTGGAAGATCAAATTGAGGCGTGCAATGTACCTT
 TCAGATACGACTGTAACCATGCTAGCAAACCTTAGTACCCTTACTGTAACCTGATAT
 CTTTTCTGCTGTTAGTCTGTTCTCTGTGTAACATCTCAAGAAGATGCACCTCCATGG
 CAAAGGATCTCAAGATCCCAGTACCAAGGTCCACATAAAAGTTTTCAAACTGTGATC
 TCCTTCCTCTTGTTATGTGCCATTTACTTTGTGTCTGTAATAATATCAGTTTGGAGTT
 TTAAGAATCTGGAAAACAAACCTGTCTTCATGTTCTGCCAAGCTATTGGATTGAGCTG
 TTCTTCAGCCCACCGTTTCATCCTGATTGGGGAAACAAGAAGCTAAAGCAGACTTAT
 CTTTCAGTTTTGTGGCAAATGACGTAAGTGGGTGAAAGGAGAGAAGCCTTCATCTCCAT
 AG

PROTEIN SEQUENCE:

MITFLPIIFSILVVVTFVIGNFANGFIALVNSTEWVKRQKISFADQIVTALAVSRVGL
 LWVLLLNWYSTVLNPAFCVELRRTAYNIWAVTGHFSNWPATSLSIFYLLKIANFSNL
 IFLRLKRRVKSIVLVMMLGPLLFLACHLFVVNMNQIVWTKEYEGNMTWKIKLRRAMYL
 SDTTVTMLANLVPFTVTLISFLLLVCSLCKHLKKMHLHGKGSQDPSTKVHIKVLQTVI
 SFLLLCALYFVSVIISVNSFKNLENKPVFMFCQAIGFSCSSAHPFILIWGNKKLKQTY
 LSVLWQNTYWVKGEKPSSP

FIG. 1**ALIGNMENT OF C-TERMINAL SEQUENCES**

hT2R50 - KLKQTYLSVLWQMRY stop
 hT2R50L- KLKQTYLSVLWQNTYWVKGEKPSSP stop
 hT2R61 - KLKQTFLSVFWQMRYWVKGEKTSSP stop
 hT2R64 - KLKQTFLSVLRQVRYWVKGEKPSSP stop
 hT2R75 - KLKQTFLSVLWHVRYWVKGEKPSSS stop

FIG. 2

STRUCTURES OF ACETILPYRAZINE AND ETHILPYRAZINE

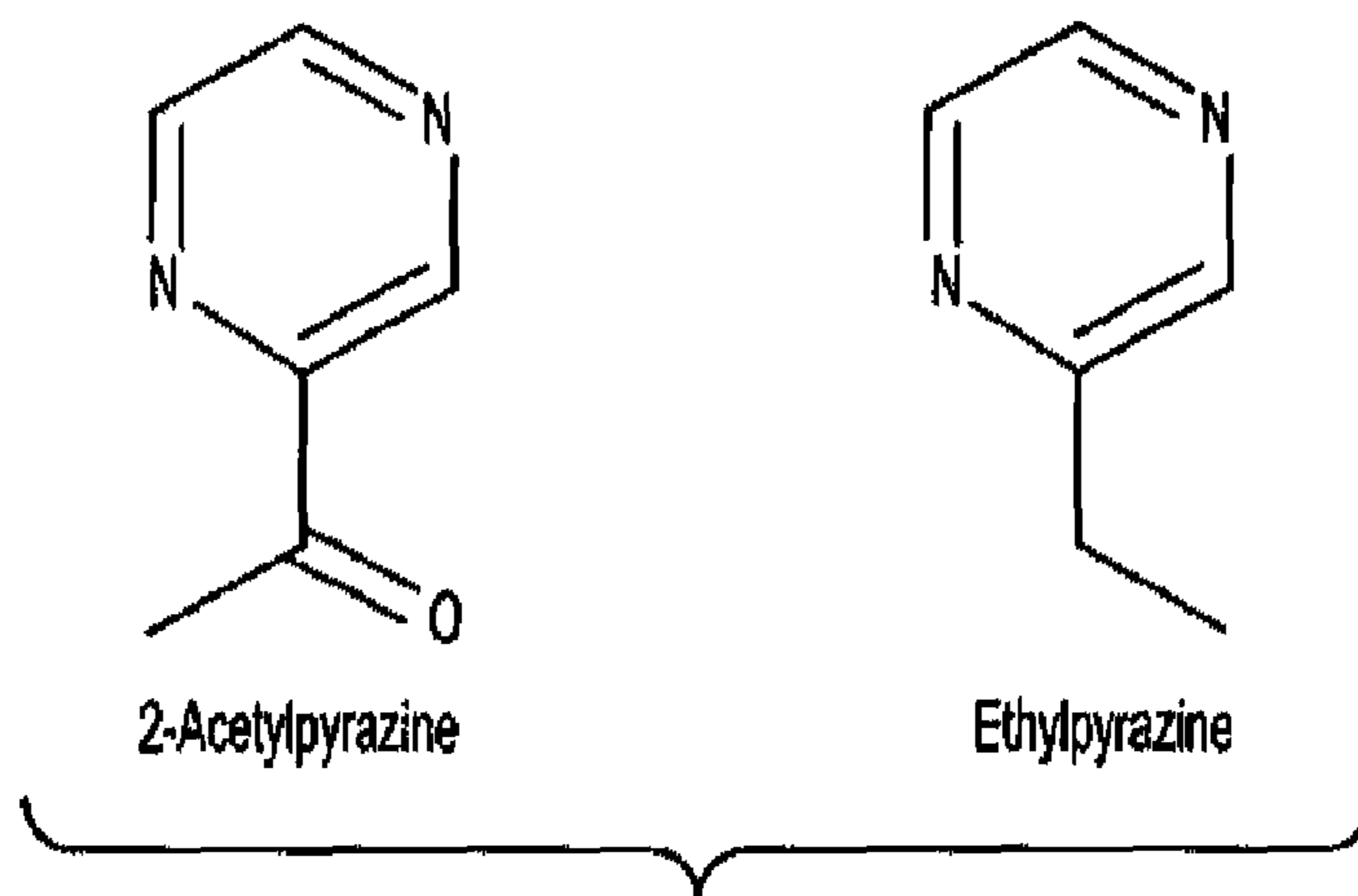


FIG. 3

BOTH SHORT AND LONG VERSIONS OF hT2R50 RECOGNIZE 2-ACETILPYRAZINE

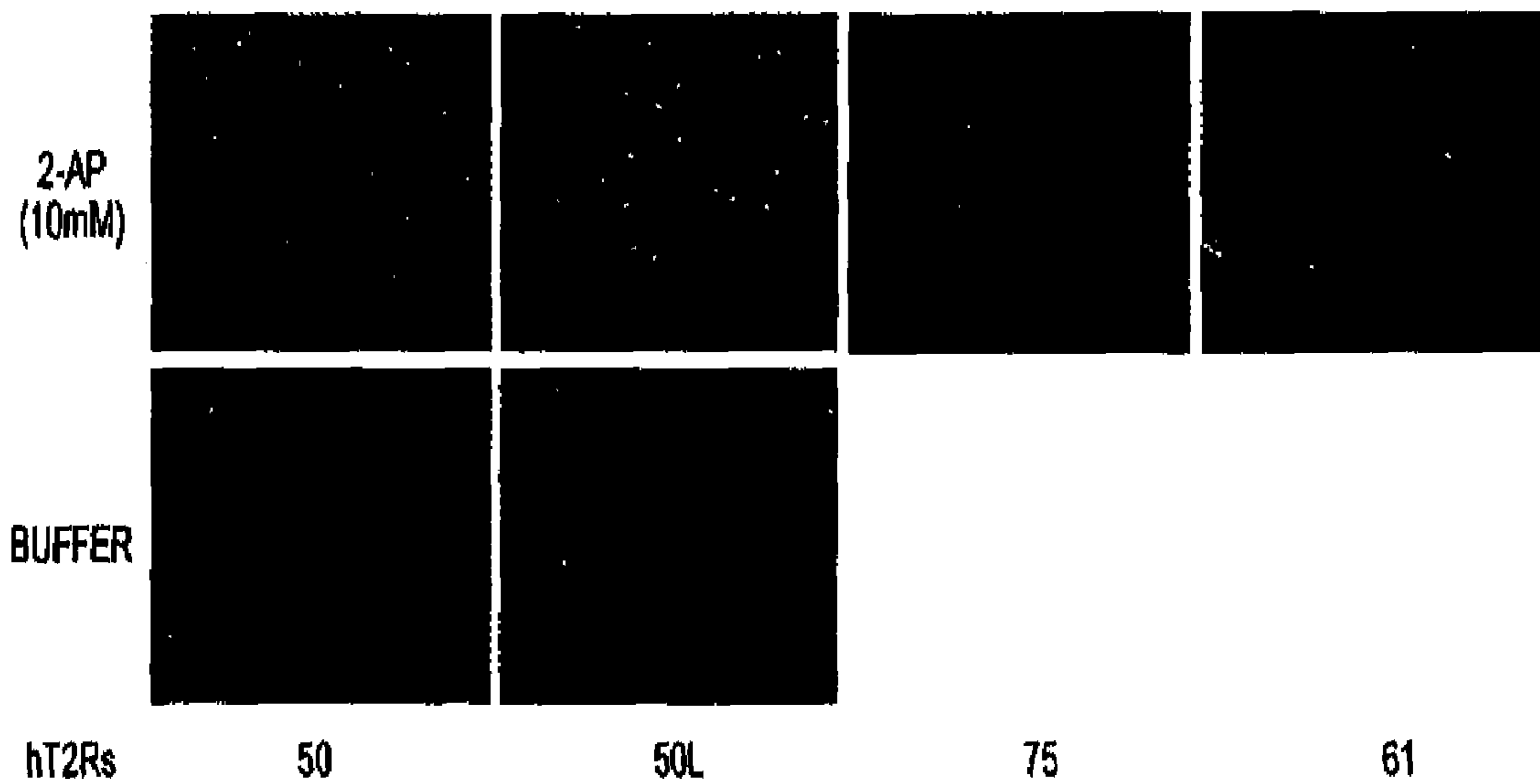


FIG. 4

**METHODS OF IDENTIFYING MODULATORS
OF BITTER TASTE USING HT2R50
RECEPTORS**

RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a divisional of U.S. application Ser. No. 11/850,337 filed on Sep. 5, 2007 (now U.S. Pat. No. 7,811,788), which claims benefit of U.S. provisional No. 60/842,016 filed on Sep. 5, 2006. This application also relates to but does not claim priority to U.S. application Ser. No. 09/825,882 filed on Mar. 5, 2001 by the present Assignee Senomyx Inc. These applications are incorporated by reference in their entirety herein. These applications relate to the hT2R50 bitter taste receptor and other human T2R taste receptors as well as the use thereof to identify taste modulatory molecules and potential therapeutics.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to the elucidation of a novel haplotype of a specific human taste receptor hT2R50 (which is also known in the art as hT2R45 or hTas2R45) and the elucidation of ligands that modulate this novel haplotype.

Based on this discovery, this novel haplotype and variants thereof are useful in assays, preferably high throughput cell-based assays, for identifying compounds that modulate preferably block bitter taste associated with this hT2R50 haplotype. Compounds identified using these assays may be used as additives in foods, beverages or medicinal products to improve the taste thereof.

Also, the present invention relates to the use of the subject T2R genes and the corresponding polypeptides and cells which express same in therapeutic screens, e.g., for identifying compounds that can be used to modulate gastrointestinal functions such as food sensing, absorption, regulation of gastrointestinal hormone and peptide secretion, transport and absorption, responses to toxins in the lingual and gastrointestinal systems, treatment of gastrointestinal and metabolic disorders such as eating disorders, diabetes, obesity, and the like.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RELATED ART

One of the basic taste modalities that humans can recognize is bitter. The physiology of bitter taste until quite recently was very poorly understood. Recent studies have started to shed light on the biology of taste (Lindemann, *Nature* (2001)). It is now known that many bitter compounds produce bitter taste by interacting with cell surface receptors. These receptors belong to the family of seven transmembrane domain receptors that interact with intracellular G proteins. A novel family of GPCRs, termed T2R5, has been identified in humans and rodents (Adler et al., *Cell* 100(6):693-702 (2000); Chandrashekar et al., *Cell* 100(6): 703-711 (2000); Matsunami H, Montmayeur JP, Buck L B. *Nature* 404(6778): 601-4 (2000)). Several lines of evidence prior to the subject invention suggested that T2R5 mediate responses to bitter compounds. First, T2R genes are specifically expressed in subset of taste receptor cells of the tongue and palate epithelia. Second, the gene for one of the human T2R5 (hT2R1) is located in a chromosomal locus that is linked to sensitivity to bitter compound 6-n-propyl-2-thiouracil in humans (Adler et al., (Id.) (2000)). Third, one of the mouse T2R5 (mT2R5) is located in a chromosomal locus that is linked to sensitivity to bitter compound cycloheximide in mice. It was also shown that mT2R5 can activate gustducin, G protein specifically expressed in taste cells and linked to bitter stimuli transduc-

tion (Wong et al., *Nature* 381:796-800 (1996)). Gustducin activation by mT2R5 occurs only in response to cycloheximide (Chandrashekar et al., (Id.) (2000)). Thus, it has been proposed that mT2R family mediates bitter taste response in mice, whereas hT2R family mediates bitter taste response in humans. Only one human T2R was suggested as having identified bitter ligand—hT2R4 was shown as being activated by denatonium (Chandrashekar et al., (Id.) 2000). However, effective denatonium concentrations used in the study (1.5 mM) were unusually high, i.e., is 10⁵-fold higher than the reported bitter threshold for denatonium to humans (Saroli, *Naturwissenschaften* 71:428-429 (1984)). Thus, no specific bitter ligand was convincingly matched to any hT2R. It has been also suggested that each hT2R is able to bind multiple bitter ligands. This hypothesis is based on the fact that hT2R family consists of only 25 identified members, whereas humans can recognize hundreds of different compounds as bitter. Sequences of hT2R5 have been previously reported and are disclosed in published PCT applications by Zuker et al. (WO 01/18050 A2, (2001)) and Adler et al. (WO 01/77676 A1 (2001)) both of which are incorporated by reference in their entirety herein.

One of the difficulties of studying T2R function is that these receptors are not readily expressed in cultured mammalian cell lines. To improve T2R expression an N-terminal sequence from well-expressed GPCR, rhodopsin, was attached to T2R sequences (Chandrashekar et al., (Id.) 2000). This N-terminal tag also allowed easy monitoring of protein expression due to available antibody. Whereas the incorporation of the rhodopsin tag improved expression of some T2R5 in mammalian cell lines, many of them still were not expressed well enough for functional studies. In a different approach mT2R5 was successfully expressed in insect Sf9 cells and used for functional studies using biochemical GTPγS binding assay (Chandrashekar et al., (Id.) 2000).

In Applicants' earlier patent application, U.S. Ser. No. 09/825,882 now patented, Applicants identified and provided the nucleic acid sequences and polypeptide sequences for a number of then-novel human taste receptors including hT2R51, hT2R54, hT2R55, hT2R61, hT2R63, hT2R64, hT2R65, hT2R67, hT2R71, and hT2R75. Additionally in U.S. Ser. No. 10/628,464 filed on Jul. 29, 2003. Applicants provided the polypeptide and DNA sequence for another identified novel human taste receptor referred to therein as hT2R76.

Also, in U.S. Ser. No. 10/191,058 incorporated by reference herein in its entirety, Applicants discovered ligands that specifically activate three different human T2R5. Additionally, Applicants recently filed U.S. Ser. No. 11/455,693 which further identified bitter ligands that specifically bind to other human T2R5, and provided related assays.

Also, relating to practical utilities of the invention it has been reported that both T2R5 and T1R5 taste receptors are expressed in the gastrointestinal system. For example, Wu et al., *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA* 99(4):2392-7 (2002) report that T2R5 are expressed in enterendocrine cells (STC1 cells) as well as gustducin and transducin subunits and that these cells likely respond to bitter ligands in the gastrointestinal tract. Also, it has been reported by Chen et al., *Amer. J. Physiol. Cell Physiol.* 291(4):C726-39 (2006) that bitter taste stimuli induce Ca⁺⁺ signaling and cholecystokinin (CCK) release in enterendocrine STC-1 cells. Also, Rozengurt, *A J Physiol Gastrointest Liver Physiol* 291(2):G171-7 (2006) report that taste receptors in the gut likely play a role in molecular sending the control of digestive functions, and hormonal and/or neuronal pathways and that they may play a role in the detection of harmful drugs and survival responses.

Further, Stermini *Am J Physiol Gastrointest Liver Physiol.* 292(2):G457-61 (2007) report that taste receptors in the gut may be involved in gastrointestinal functions such as molecular sensing, nutrient absorption, protection from harmful substances, and further suggest that an understanding of these mechanisms may be relevant to disease states and conditions such as feeding disorders, and inflammation. Further, it has been recently suggested by Mace et al., *J. Physiol.* 2007 [Epub] that T2R5 and T1R5 activate phospholipase C beta 2, PLC beta2, and that there is likely a molecular intestinal sensing system in the gut similar to that present in lingual cells and that gastrointestinal cells such as brush cells or solitary chemosensory cells expressing taste receptors may result in GLUT2 increase and may play a role in nutrient sensing, and nutrition in the treatment of obesity and diabetes. Also, Cui et al, *Curr Pharm Des.* 12(35):4591-600 (2006) suggest that T1R5 expressed in the gut may be used in assays for compounds in treating obesity and diabetes as well as artificial sweeteners.

However, notwithstanding what has been reported and the understanding that T2R members regulate bitter taste, and their possible role in gastrointestinal functions there exists a need for the identification of specific ligands which activate human bitter T2R taste receptors. A greater understanding of the binding properties of different T2R5, particularly human T2R5, would be highly beneficial as it will greater facilitate the use thereof in selecting compounds having desired taste modulatory properties, i.e., which block or inhibit the taste of specific bitter compounds. Also, it will provide for the identification of compounds for treating and modulating gastrointestinal functions and related diseases such as obesity, diabetes, food absorption, food sensing, eating disorders, and in the regulation of related hormones and peptides such as GLUT2, cholecystokin et al.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Toward that end, the present invention relates to the discovery of a novel haplotype of a human T2R, and its use in taste modulator assays.

More specifically the invention provides a nucleic acid sequence encoding a novel haplotype of hT2R50 and the corresponding taste receptor polypeptide.

Also the invention provides recombinant cells which express this novel hT2R50 haplotype and variants thereof.

Further the invention identifies ligands which specifically recognize this hT2R haplotype as well as the previously identified form of hT2R50.

Also, the invention provides cell-based assays for identifying whether the haplotype responds to different bitter ligands than the previously identified for of hT2R50.

These discoveries were made using cell-based assays that measured the activity of T2R5 including the novel hT2R50 haplotype disclosed herein using cells that express a particular T2R in the presence and absence of specific bitter ligands. In particular, as described in greater detail infra, HEK cell lines expressing specific T2R5 including the subject hT2R50 haplotype and the originally identified hT2R50 allele, (reported in the above-cited Adler PCT and US applications) on their surface and which further express a G protein that couples thereto were used in cell-based assays that detected putative bitter ligands based on changes in intracellular calcium concentrations. It was found that both the subject novel hT2R50 haplotype as well as the previously identified hT2R50 allele specifically recognized and responded to

structurally related bitter compounds (2-acetylpyrazine and ethylpyrazine) whereas other hT2R5 were not activated under similar conditions.

Therefore, the invention embraces the use of this hT2R haplotype in assays, preferably high-throughput assays, to identify compounds that block the activation of this receptor by these bitter compounds and potentially other bitter compounds.

Further, the present invention relates to the use of the subject T2R haplotype and the corresponding polypeptide and cells which express same in therapeutic screening assays, e.g., for identifying compounds that regulate or modulate gastrointestinal functions such as food and nutrient sensing, food absorption, regulation of digestive hormones and peptides, responses to toxins, and for treating gastrointestinal or metabolic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and inflammatory or autoimmune gastrointestinal diseases such as IBD, celiac disease, Crohn's disease, et al.

The invention also embraces assays which include an additional step which evaluates the effect of the identified modulating compounds in human or other taste tests, and evaluates the effect of the identified compounds on bitter taste and/or in further in vitro or in vivo clinical tests to evaluate the effect of an identified compound on a specific gastrointestinal, digestive or metabolic function or disease. Also, the invention embraces the use of the identified compounds in foods, beverages and medicines as flavor or taste modulators, i.e., to inhibit bitter taste, e.g., the bitter taste associated with specific beverages and foods or medicaments.

Further, the invention embraces the production of food, beverages and medicinals which have been treated to remove compounds that specifically activate bitter taste receptors, e.g., foods and beverages that have been processed to remove or reduce the amount of bitter compounds comprised therein.

Still further the present invention embraces medicaments containing identified compounds suitable for treating or preventing metabolic disorders, digestive functions, and gastrointestinal diseases involving T2R5. Particularly, the present invention contemplates medicaments for treating or modulating conditions such as Crohn's, celiac disease, obesity, diabetes, food sensing, food absorption, digestive hormone or peptide secretion, and the like.

OBJECTS OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the invention to identify a novel haplotype of hT2R50

It is another object of the invention to determine whether this haplotype correlates to genetic differences in bitter taste perception in screened individuals.

It is a specific object of the invention to identify compounds that modulate, preferably block the activation of this hT2R50 haplotype or fragments, variants, orthologs, or chimera thereof by bitter ligands including 2-acetylpyrazine and ethylpyrazine or other bitter ligands including compounds structurally related thereto.

It is another specific object of the invention to use cells or cell membranes that comprise or express (stably or transiently) the subject hT2R50 haplotype or a fragment, variant, ortholog, mutant or chimera thereof in assays to identify compounds that modulate, preferably block the activation of this bitter taste receptor.

It is an even more specific object of the invention to use cells, preferably mammalian, amphibian or insect cells, e.g., HEK293T cells that express a G protein that couples thereto, e.g., G_{α15}, G_{α16}, gustducin, transducin or a chimera thereof in

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cell-based assays that detect changes in intracellular calcium order to detect compounds that modulate the activation of this novel haplotype.

It is another object of the present invention to provide the use of the subject T2R haplotype and the corresponding polypeptide and cells which express same in therapeutic screening assays, e.g., for identifying compounds that regulate or modulate gastrointestinal functions such as food and nutrient sensing, food absorption, regulation of digestive hormones and peptides, responses to toxins, and for treating gastrointestinal or metabolic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and inflammatory or autoimmune gastrointestinal diseases such as IBD, celiac disease, Crohn's disease, et al.

It is another object of the invention to provide assays which include an additional step which evaluates the effect of the identified modulating compounds in human or other taste tests, and evaluates the effect of the identified compounds on bitter taste and/or in further in vitro or in vivo clinical tests to evaluate the effect of an identified compound on a specific gastrointestinal, digestive or metabolic function or disease.

It is another object of the invention too provide the use of the identified compounds in foods, beverages and medicines as flavor or taste modulators, i.e., to inhibit bitter taste, e.g., the bitter taste associated with specific beverages and foods or medicaments.

It is also an object of the invention to provide for the production of food, beverages and medicinals which have been treated to remove compounds that specifically activate bitter taste receptors, e.g., foods and beverages that have been processed to remove or reduce the amount of bitter compounds comprised therein.

Still further it is an object of the invention to provide medicaments containing identified compounds suitable for treating or preventing metabolic disorders, digestive functions, and gastrointestinal diseases involving T2R5. Particularly, the present invention contemplates medicaments for treating or modulating conditions such as Crohn's, celiac disease, obesity, diabetes, food sensing, food absorption, digestive hormone or peptide secretion, and the like.

It is another object of the invention to confirm that the identified compounds modulate, preferably block bitter taste, e.g. that elicited by pyrazine compounds in taste tests, preferably human taste tests.

It is another object of the invention to utilize compounds identified in the assays described herein as additives in compositions to modulate, preferably block bitter taste induced by compounds that specifically activate this taste receptor.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

FIG. 1 contains the nucleic acid sequences (SEQ ID NO:2) and protein sequence (SEQ ID NO:3) for the subject haplotype of hT2R50 which differs from the previously identified hT2R50 by the presence of 10 additional amino acids at its carboxy-terminus.

FIG. 2 aligns the carboxy-termini of the subject hT2R50 haplotype (SEQ ID NO:4), the previously identified hT2R50 (SEQ ID NO:5), hT2R61 (SEQ ID NO:6), hT2R64 (SEQ ID NO:7) and hT2R75 (SEQ ID NO:8). It can be seen that these hT2R5 with the exception of the previous (shorter form) of hT2R50 contain the same 10 carboxy-terminal amino acids at their C-terminus and that hT2R75 contains the same 9 of 10 amino acids at its C-terminus (the last amino acid of hT2R75 is serine rather than proline).

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FIG. 3 contains the structures for 2-acetylpyrazine and ethylpyrazine which are bitter ligands that specifically interact with the subject hT2R50 haplotype and the previous shorter form.

FIG. 4 shows dose response of the subject hT2R50 haplotype and the previously identified shorter form to 2-acetylpyrazine at 10 mM.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Prior to specifically describing the invention, the following definitions are provided.

The term "T2R" family includes polymorphic variants, alleles, mutants, and homologs that: (1) have about 30-40% amino acid sequence identity, more specifically about 40, 50, 60, 70, 75, 80, 85, 90, 95, 96, 97, 98, or 99% amino acid sequence identity to the T2R5 disclosed infra, and in the Zuker (Id) (2001) and Adler (Id.) PCT and US applications incorporated, by reference herein over a window of about 25 amino acids, optimally 50-100 amino acids; (2) specifically bind to antibodies raised against an immunogen comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of the T2R sequences disclosed infra, and conservatively modified variants thereof, (3) specifically hybridize (with a size of at least about 100, optionally at least about 500-1000 nucleotides) under stringent hybridization conditions to a sequence selected from the group consisting of the T2R DNA sequences disclosed infra, and conservatively modified variants thereof, (4) comprise a sequence at least about 40% identical to an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of the T2R amino acid sequences disclosed infra or (5) are amplified by primers that specifically hybridize under stringent hybridization conditions to the described T2R sequences.

In particular, these "T2R' s" include a human bitter taste receptor GPCR which is referred to herein as hT2R50 and its haplotype hT2R50 having the DNA and amino acid sequences contained in FIG. 1 and variants, alleles, mutants, orthologs and chimeras thereof which specifically bind to bitter ligands, e.g., such as pyrazines including 2-acetylpyrazine and ethylpyrazine.

"T2R haplotype" refers to a naturally occurring allelic variant of a hT2R polypeptide found in different individuals such as the hT2R50 haplotype and corresponding DNA contained in FIG. 1. Such T2R haplotypes may respond to the same or different bitter ligands as the originally identified hT2R polypeptide reported earlier. For example, some haplotypes may be involved in the ability of some individuals to taste different bitter ligands or to perceive such ligands differently than other individuals.

While T2R genes exhibit substantial sequence divergence at both the protein and DNA level, all T2R5 isolated to date have been found to contain certain consensus sequences in particular regions that are identical or which possess or at least 70-75% sequence identity to the T2R consensus sequence identified previously in the Adler et al (WO 01/77676 A1 (2001) and Zuker et al. WO 01/18050 A2, both incorporated by reference in their entirety herein.

Topologically, certain chemosensory GPCRs have an "N-terminal domain;" "extracellular domains;" a "transmembrane domain" comprising seven transmembrane regions, and corresponding cytoplasmic and extracellular loops, "cytoplasmic regions;" and a "C-terminal region" (see, e.g., Hoon et al, Cell, 96:541-51 (1999); Buck & Axel, Cell, 65:175-87 (1991)). These regions can be structurally identified using methods known to those of skill in the art, such as sequence analysis programs that identify hydrophobic and

hydrophilic domains (see, e.g., Stryer, *Biochemistry*, (3rd ed. 1988); see also any of a number of Internet based sequence analysis programs, such as those found at dot.imgen.bcm.tmc.edu). These regions are useful for making chimeric proteins and for in vitro assays of the invention, e.g., ligand binding assays.

“Extracellular domains” therefore refers to the domains of T2R polypeptides that protrude from the cellular membrane and are exposed to the extracellular face of the cell. Such regions would include the “N-terminal domain” that is exposed to the extracellular face of the cell, as well as the extracellular loops of the transmembrane domain that are exposed to the extracellular face of the cell, i.e., the extracellular loops between transmembrane regions 2 and 3, transmembrane regions 4 and 5, and transmembrane regions 6 and 7. The “N-terminal domain” starts at the N-terminus and extends to a region close to the start of the transmembrane region. These extracellular regions are useful for in vitro ligand binding assays, both soluble and solid phase. In addition, transmembrane regions, described below, can also be involved in ligand binding, either in combination with the extracellular region or alone, and are therefore also useful for in vitro ligand binding assays.

“Transmembrane domain,” which comprises the seven transmembrane “regions,” refers to the domain of T2R polypeptides that lies within the plasma membrane, and may also include the corresponding cytoplasmic (intracellular) and extracellular loops, also referred to as transmembrane “regions.” The seven transmembrane regions and extracellular and cytoplasmic loops can be identified using standard methods, as described in Kyte & Doolittle, *J. Mol. Biol.*, 157:105-32 (1982)), or in Stryer, *supra*.

“Cytoplasmic domains” refers to the domains of T2R proteins that face the inside of the cell, e.g., the “C-terminal domain” and the intracellular loops of the transmembrane domain, e.g., the intracellular loops between transmembrane regions 1 and 2, transmembrane regions 3 and 4, and transmembrane regions 5 and 6. “C-terminal domain” refers to the region that spans from the end of the last transmembrane region to the C-terminus of the protein, and which is normally located within the cytoplasm.

The term “7-transmembrane receptor” means a polypeptide belonging to a superfamily of transmembrane proteins that have seven regions that span the plasma membrane seven times (thus, the seven regions are called “transmembrane” or “TM” domains TM I to TM VII). The families of olfactory and certain taste receptors each belong to this super-family. 7-transmembrane receptor polypeptides have similar and characteristic primary, secondary and tertiary structures, as discussed in further detail below.

The term “ligand-binding region” refers to sequences derived from a chemosensory or taste receptor that substantially incorporates transmembrane domains II to VII (TM II to VII). The region may be capable of binding a ligand, and more particularly, a taste eliciting compound.

The term “plasma membrane translocation domain” or simply “translocation domain” means a polypeptide domain that is able to transport a polypeptide such as a T2R polypeptide onto the cell surface. An exemplary translocation domain may be derived from a rhodopsin such as

(5'-MNGTEGPNFYVPFSNKTGVV; SEQ ID NO:1). These peptide domains, when incorporated into the amino terminus of a polypeptide coding sequence, can with great efficiency “chaperone” or “translocate” the hybrid (“fusion”) protein to the cell plasma membrane. This particular “translocation domain” was initially derived from the amino terminus of the human rhodopsin receptor polypeptide, a 7-trans-

membrane receptor. Another translocation domain has been derived from the bovine rhodopsin sequence and is also useful for facilitating translocation. Rhodopsin derived sequences are particularly efficient in translocating 7-transmembrane fusion proteins to the plasma membrane.

“Functional equivalency” means the domain’s ability and efficiency in translocating newly translated proteins to the plasma membrane as efficiently another translocation domain such as exemplary SEQ ID NO:1 under similar conditions; relative efficiencies can be measured (in quantitative terms) and compared, as described herein. Domains falling within the scope of the invention can be determined by routine screening for their efficiency in translocating newly synthesized polypeptides to the plasma membrane in a cell (mammalian, *Xenopus*, and the like) with the same efficiency as the twenty amino acid long translocation domain SEQ ID NO:1.

The phrase “functional effects” in the context of assays for testing compounds that modulate T2R family member mediated taste transduction and includes the determination of any parameter that is indirectly or directly under the influence of the receptor, e.g., functional, physical and chemical effects. It includes ligand binding, changes in ion flux, membrane potential, current flow, transcription, G protein binding, GPCR phosphorylation or dephosphorylation, signal transduction, receptor-ligand interactions, second messenger concentrations (e.g., cAMP, cGMP, IP3, or intracellular Ca^{2+}), in vitro, in vivo, and ex vivo and also includes other physiologic effects such increases or decreases of neurotransmitter or hormone release.

By “determining the functional effect” is meant assays for a compound that increases or decreases a parameter that is indirectly or directly under the influence of a T2R family member, e.g., functional, physical and chemical effects. Such functional effects can be measured by any means known to those skilled in the art, e.g., changes in spectroscopic characteristics (e.g., fluorescence, absorbance, refractive index), hydrodynamic (e.g., shape), chromatographic, or solubility properties, patch clamping, voltage-sensitive dyes, whole cell currents, radioisotope efflux, inducible markers, oocyte T2R gene expression; tissue culture cell T2R expression; transcriptional activation of T2R genes; ligand binding assays; voltage, membrane potential and conductance changes; ion flux assays; changes in intracellular second messengers such as cAMP, cGMP, and inositol triphosphate (IP3); changes in intracellular calcium levels; neurotransmitter release, and the like.

“Inhibitors,” “activators,” and “modulators” of T2R proteins receptors are used interchangeably to refer to inhibitory, activating, or modulating molecules identified using in vitro and in vivo assays for taste transduction, e.g., ligands, agonists, antagonists, and their homologs and mimetics. Inhibitors are compounds that, e.g., bind to, partially or totally block stimulation, decrease, prevent, delay activation, inactivate, desensitize, or down regulate taste transduction, e.g., antagonists. Activators are compounds that, e.g., bind to, stimulate, increase, open, activate, facilitate, enhance activation, sensitize, or up regulate taste transduction, e.g., agonists. Modulators include compounds that, e.g., alter the interaction of a receptor with: extracellular proteins that bind activators or inhibitor (e.g., ebnerin and other members of the hydrophobic carrier family); G Proteins; kinases (e.g., homologs of rhodopsin kinase and beta adrenergic receptor kinases that are involved in deactivation and desensitization of a receptor); and arrestins, which also deactivate and desensitize receptors. Modulators include genetically modified versions of T2R family members, e.g., with altered activity, as well as

naturally occurring and synthetic ligands, antagonists, agonists, small chemical molecules and the like.

Such assays for inhibitors and activators include, e.g., expressing T2R family members in cells or cell membranes, applying putative modulator compounds in the presence or absence of compounds that modulate, e.g., bitter compounds, and then determining the functional effects on taste transduction, as described above. Samples or assays comprising T2R family members that are treated with a potential activator, inhibitor, or modulator are compared to control samples without the inhibitor, activator, or modulator to examine the extent of modulation. Control samples (untreated with modulators) are assigned a relative T2R activity value of 100%. Inhibition of a T2R is achieved when the T2R activity value relative to the control is about 80%, optionally 50% or 25-0%. Activation of a T2R is achieved when the T2R activity value relative to the control is 110%, optionally 150%, optionally 200-500%, or 1000-3000% higher.

The terms “purified,” “substantially purified,” and “isolated” as used herein refer to the state of being free of other, dissimilar compounds with which the compound of the invention is normally associated in its natural state. Preferably, “purified,” “substantially purified,” and “isolated” means that the composition comprises at least 0.5%, 1%, 5%, 10%, or 20%, and most preferably at least 50% or 75% of the mass, by weight, of a given sample. In one preferred embodiment, these terms refer to the compound of the invention comprising at least 95% of the mass, by weight, of a given sample. As used herein, the terms “purified,” “substantially purified,” and “isolated”, when referring to a nucleic acid or protein, of nucleic acids or proteins, also refers to a state of purification or concentration different than that which occurs naturally in the mammalian, especially human, body. Any degree of purification or concentration greater than that which occurs naturally in the mammalian, especially human, body, including (1) the purification from other associated structures or compounds or (2) the association with structures or compounds to which it is not normally associated in the mammalian, especially human, body, are within the meaning of “isolated.” The nucleic acid or protein or classes of nucleic acids or proteins, described herein, may be isolated, or otherwise associated with structures or compounds to which they are not normally associated in nature, according to a variety of methods and processes known to those of skill in the art.

As used herein, the term “isolated,” when referring to a nucleic acid or polypeptide refers to a state of purification or concentration different than that which occurs naturally in the mammalian, especially human, body. Any degree of purification or concentration greater than that which occurs naturally in the body, including (1) the purification from other naturally-occurring associated structures or compounds, or (2) the association with structures or compounds to which it is not normally associated in the body are within the meaning of “isolated” as used herein. The nucleic acids or polypeptides described herein may be isolated or otherwise associated with structures or compounds to which they are not normally associated in nature, according to a variety of methods and processes known to those of skill in the art.

As used herein, the terms “amplifying” and “amplification” refer to the use of any suitable amplification methodology for generating or detecting recombinant or naturally expressed nucleic acid, as described in detail, below. For example, the invention provides methods and reagents (e.g., specific oligonucleotide primer pairs) for amplifying (e.g., by polymerase chain reaction, PCR) naturally expressed (e.g., genomic or mRNA) or recombinant (e.g., cDNA) nucleic

acids of the invention (e.g., taste eliciting compound-binding sequences of the invention) in vivo or in vitro.

The term “expression vector” refers to any recombinant expression system for the purpose of expressing a nucleic acid sequence of the invention in vitro or in vivo, constitutively or inducibly, in any cell, including prokaryotic, yeast, fungal, plant, insect or mammalian cell. The term includes linear or circular expression systems. The term includes expression systems that remain episomal or integrate into the host cell genome. The expression systems can have the ability to self-replicate or not, i.e., drive only transient expression in a cell. The term includes recombinant expression “cassettes” which contain only the minimum elements needed for transcription of the recombinant nucleic acid.

The term “library” means a preparation that is a mixture of different nucleic acid or poly-peptide molecules, such as the library of recombinant generated sensory, particularly taste receptor ligand-binding regions generated by amplification of nucleic acid with degenerate primer pairs, or an isolated collection of vectors that incorporate the amplified ligand-binding regions, or a mixture of cells each randomly transfected with at least one vector encoding an taste receptor.

The term “nucleic acid” or “nucleic acid sequence” refers to a deoxyribonucleotide or ribonucleotide oligonucleotide in either single- or double-stranded form. The term encompasses nucleic acids, i.e., oligonucleotides, containing known analogs of natural nucleotides. The term also encompasses nucleic-acid-like structures with synthetic backbones.

Unless otherwise indicated, a particular nucleic acid sequence also implicitly encompasses conservatively modified variants thereof (e.g., degenerate codon substitutions) and complementary sequences, as well as the sequence explicitly indicated. Specifically, degenerate codon substitutions may be achieved by generating, e.g., sequences in which the third position of one or more selected codons is substituted with mixed-base and/or deoxyinosine residues (Batzer et al., *Nucleic Acid Res.*, 19:5081 (1991); Ohtsuka et al., *J. Biol. Chem.*, 260:2605-08 (1985); Rossolini et al., *Mol. Cell. Probes*, 8:91-98 (1994)). The term nucleic acid is used interchangeably with gene, cDNA, mRNA, oligonucleotide, and polynucleotide.

The terms “polypeptide,” “peptide” and “protein” are used interchangeably herein to refer to a polymer of amino acid residues. The terms apply to amino acid polymers in which one or more amino acid residue is an artificial chemical mimetic of a corresponding naturally occurring amino acid, as well as to naturally occurring amino acid polymers and non-naturally occurring amino acid polymer.

The “translocation domain,” “ligand-binding region”, and chimeric receptors compositions described herein also include “analogs,” or “conservative variants” and “mimetics” (“peptidomimetics”) with structures and activity that substantially correspond to the exemplary sequences. Thus, the terms “conservative variant” or “analog” or “mimetic” refer to a polypeptide which has a modified amino acid sequence, such that the change(s) do not substantially alter the polypeptide’s (the conservative variant’s) structure and/or activity, as defined herein. These include conservatively modified variations of an amino acid sequence, i.e., amino acid substitutions, additions or deletions of those residues that are not critical for protein activity, or substitution of amino acids with residues having similar properties (e.g., acidic, basic, positively or negatively charged, polar or non-polar, etc.) such that the substitutions of even critical amino acids does not substantially alter structure and/or activity.

More particularly, “conservatively modified variants” applies to both amino acid and nucleic acid sequences. With

respect to particular nucleic acid sequences, conservatively modified variants refers to those nucleic acids which encode identical or essentially identical amino acid sequences, or where the nucleic acid does not encode an amino acid sequence, to essentially identical sequences. Because of the degeneracy of the genetic code, a large number of functionally identical nucleic acids encode any given protein.

For instance, the codons GCA, GCC, GCG and GCU all encode the amino acid alanine. Thus, at every position where an alanine is specified by a codon, the codon can be altered to any of the corresponding codons described without altering the encoded polypeptide.

Such nucleic acid variations are "silent variations," which are one species of conservatively modified variations. Every nucleic acid sequence herein which encodes a polypeptide also describes every possible silent variation of the nucleic acid. One of skill will recognize that each codon in a nucleic acid (except AUG, which is ordinarily the only codon for methionine, and TGG, which is ordinarily the only codon for tryptophan) can be modified to yield a functionally identical molecule. Accordingly, each silent variation of a nucleic acid which encodes a polypeptide is implicit in each described sequence.

Conservative substitution tables providing functionally similar amino acids are well known in the art. For example, one exemplary guideline to select conservative substitutions includes (original residue followed by exemplary substitution): ala/gly or ser; arg/lys; asn/gln or his; asp/glu; cys/ser; gin/asn; gly/asp; gly/ala or pro; his/asn or gln; ile/leu or val; leu/ile or val; lys/arg or gln or glu; met/leu or tyr or ile; phe/met or leu or tyr; ser/thr; thr/ser; trp/tyr; tyr/trp or phe; val/ile or leu. An alternative exemplary guideline uses the following six groups, each containing amino acids that are conservative substitutions for one another: 1) Alanine (A), Serine (S), Threonine (T); 2) Aspartic acid (D), Glutamic acid (E); 3) Asparagine (N), Glutamine (Q); 4) Arginine (R), Lysine (I); 5) Isoleucine (I), Leucine (L), Methionine (M), Valine (V); and 6) Phenylalanine (F), Tyrosine (Y), Tryptophan (W); (see also, e.g., Creighton, *Proteins*, W. H. Freeman and Company (1984); Schultz and Schimer, *Principles of Protein Structure*, Springer-Verlag (1979)). One of skill in the art will appreciate that the above-identified substitutions are not the only possible conservative substitutions. For example, for some purposes, one may regard all charged amino acids as conservative substitutions for each other whether they are positive or negative. In addition, individual substitutions, deletions or additions that alter, add or delete a single amino acid or a small percentage of amino acids in an encoded sequence can also be considered "conservatively modified variations."

The terms "mimetic" and "peptidomimetic" refer to a synthetic chemical compound that has substantially the same structural and/or functional characteristics of the polypeptides, e.g., translocation domains, ligand-binding regions, or chimeric receptors of the invention. The mimetic can be either entirely composed of synthetic, non-natural analogs of amino acids, or may be a chimeric molecule of partly natural peptide amino acids and partly non-natural analogs of amino acids. The mimetic can also incorporate any amount of natural amino acid conservative substitutions as long as such substitutions also do not substantially alter the mimetic's structure and/or activity.

As with polypeptides of the invention which are conservative variants, routine experimentation will determine whether a mimetic is within the scope of the invention, i.e., that its structure and/or function is not substantially altered. Polypeptide mimetic compositions can contain any combina-

tion of non-natural structural components, which are typically from three structural groups: a) residue linkage groups other than the natural amide bond ("peptide bond") linkages; b) non-natural residues in place of naturally occurring amino acid residues; or c) residues which induce secondary structural mimicry, i.e., to induce or stabilize a secondary structure, e.g., a beta turn, gamma turn, beta sheet, alpha helix conformation, and the like. A polypeptide can be characterized as a mimetic when all or some of its residues are joined by chemical means other than natural peptide bonds. Individual peptidomimetic residues can be joined by peptide bonds, other chemical bonds or coupling means, such as, e.g., glutaraldehyde, N-hydroxysuccinimide esters, bifunctional maleimides, N,N'-dicyclohexylcarbodiimide (DCC) or N,N'-diisopropylcarbodiimide (DIC). Linking groups that can be an alternative to the traditional amide bond ("peptide bond") linkages include, e.g., ketomethylene (e.g., $-C(=O)-CH_2-$ for $-C(=O)-NH-$), aminomethylene (CH_2NH), ethylene, olefin ($CH_2=CH_2$), ether (CH_2O), thioether (CH_2S), tetrazole (CN_4), thiazole, retroamide, thioamide, or ester (see, e.g., Spatola, *Chemistry and Biochemistry of Amino Acids, Peptides and Proteins*, Vol. 7, 267-357, Marcell Dekker, *Peptide Backbone Modifications*, NY (1983)). A polypeptide can also be characterized as a mimetic by containing all or some non-natural residues in place of naturally occurring amino acid residues; non-natural residues are well described in the scientific and patent literature.

A "label" or a "detectable moiety" is a composition detectable by spectroscopic, photochemical, biochemical, immunochemical, or chemical means. For example, useful labels include ^{32}P , fluorescent dyes, electron-dense reagents, enzymes (e.g., as commonly used in an ELISA), biotin, digoxigenin, or haptens and proteins which can be made detectable, e.g., by incorporating a radiolabel into the peptide or used to detect antibodies specifically reactive with the peptide.

A "labeled nucleic acid probe or oligonucleotide" is one that is bound, either covalently, through a linker or a chemical bond, or noncovalently, through ionic, van der Waals, electrostatic, or hydrogen bonds to a label such that the presence of the probe may be detected by detecting the presence of the label bound to the probe.

As used herein a "nucleic acid probe or oligonucleotide" is defined as a nucleic acid capable of binding to a target nucleic acid of complementary sequence through one or more types of chemical bonds, usually through complementary base pairing, usually through hydrogen bond formation. As used herein, a probe may include natural (i.e., A, G, C, or T) or modified bases (7-deazaguanosine, inosine, etc.). In addition, the bases in a probe may be joined by a linkage other than a phosphodiester bond, so long as it does not interfere with hybridization. Thus, for example, probes may be peptide nucleic acids in which the constituent bases are joined by peptide bonds rather than phosphodiester linkages. It will be understood by one of skill in the art that probes may bind target sequences lacking complete complementarity with the probe sequence depending upon the stringency of the hybridization conditions. The probes are optionally directly labeled as with isotopes, chromophores, lumiphores, chromogens, or indirectly labeled such as with biotin to which a streptavidin complex may later bind. By assaying for the presence or absence of the probe, one can detect the presence or absence of the select sequence or subsequence.

The term "heterologous" when used with reference to portions of a nucleic acid indicates that the nucleic acid comprises two or more subsequences that are not found in the same relationship to each other in nature. For instance, the

nucleic acid is typically recombinantly produced, having two or more sequences from unrelated genes arranged to make a new functional nucleic acid, e.g., a promoter from one source and a coding region from another source. Similarly, a heterologous protein indicates that the protein comprises two or more subsequences that are not found in the same relationship to each other in nature (e.g., a fusion protein).

A “promoter” is defined as an array of nucleic acid sequences that direct transcription of a nucleic acid. As used herein, a promoter includes necessary nucleic acid sequences near the start site of transcription, such as, in the case of a polymerase 11 type promoter, a TATA element. A promoter also optionally includes distal enhancer or repressor elements, which can be located as much as several thousand base pairs from the start site of transcription. A “constitutive” promoter is a promoter that is active under most environmental and developmental conditions. An “inducible” promoter is a promoter that is active under environmental or developmental regulation. The term “operably linked” refers to a functional linkage between a nucleic acid expression control sequence (such as a promoter, or array of transcription factor binding sites) and a second nucleic acid sequence, wherein the expression control sequence directs transcription of the nucleic acid corresponding to the second sequence.

As used herein, “recombinant” refers to a polynucleotide synthesized or otherwise manipulated *in vitro* (e.g., “recombinant polynucleotide”), to methods of using recombinant polynucleotides to produce gene products in cells or other biological systems, or to a polypeptide (“recombinant protein”) encoded by a recombinant polynucleotide. “Recombinant means” also encompass the ligation of nucleic acids having various coding regions or domains or promoter sequences from different sources into an expression cassette or vector for expression of, e.g., inducible or constitutive expression of a fusion protein comprising a translocation domain of the invention and a nucleic acid sequence amplified using a primer of the invention.

The phrase “selectively (or specifically) hybridizes to” refers to the binding, duplexing, or hybridizing of a molecule only to a particular nucleotide sequence under stringent hybridization conditions when that sequence is present in a complex mixture (e.g., total cellular or library DNA or RNA).

The phrase “stringent hybridization conditions” refers to conditions under which a probe will hybridize to its target subsequence, typically in a complex mixture of nucleic acid, but to no other sequences. Stringent conditions are sequence dependent and will be different in different circumstances. Longer sequences hybridize specifically at higher temperatures. An extensive guide to the hybridization of nucleic acids is found in Tijssen, *Techniques in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology—Hybridisation with Nucleic Probes*, “Overview of principles of hybridization and the strategy of nucleic acid assays” (1993). Generally, stringent conditions are selected to be about 5-10° C. lower than the thermal melting point (T_m) for the specific sequence at a defined ionic strength pH. The T_m is the temperature (under defined ionic strength, pH, and nucleic concentration) at which 50% of the probes complementary to the target hybridize to the target sequence at equilibrium (as the target sequences are present in excess, at T_m , 50% of the probes are occupied at equilibrium). Stringent conditions will be those in which the salt concentration is less than about 1.0 M sodium ion, typically about 0.01 to 1.0 M sodium ion concentration (or other salts) at pH 7.0 to 8.3 and the temperature is at least about 30° C. for short probes (e.g., 10 to 50 nucleotides) and at least about 60° C. for long probes (e.g., greater than 50 nucleotides). Stringent conditions may also be achieved with the addition of destabilizing agents

such as formamide. For selective or specific hybridization, a positive signal is at least two times background, optionally 10 times background hybridization. Exemplary stringent hybridization conditions can be as following: 50% formamide, 5×SSC, and 1% SDS, incubating at 42° C., or, 5×SSC, 1% SDS, incubating at 65° C., with wash in 0.2×SSC, and 0.1% SDS at 65° C. Such hybridizations and wash steps can be carried out for, e.g., 1, 2, 5, 10, 15, 30, 60; or more minutes.

Nucleic acids that do not hybridize to each other under stringent conditions are still substantially related if the polypeptides which they encode are substantially related. This occurs, for example, when a copy of a nucleic acid is created using the maximum codon degeneracy permitted by the genetic code. In such cases, the nucleic acids typically hybridize under moderately stringent hybridization conditions. Exemplary “moderately stringent hybridization conditions” include hybridization in a buffer of 40% formamide, 1 M NaCl, 1% SDS at 37° C., and a wash in 1×SSC at 45° C. Such hybridizations and wash steps can be carried out for, e.g., 1, 2, 5, 10, 15, 30, 60, or more minutes. A positive hybridization is at least twice background. Those of ordinary skill will readily recognize that alternative hybridization and wash conditions can be utilized to provide conditions of similar stringency.

“Antibody” refers to a polypeptide comprising a framework region from an immunoglobulin gene or fragments thereof that specifically binds and recognizes an antigen. The recognized immunoglobulin genes include the kappa, lambda, alpha, gamma, delta, epsilon, and mu constant region genes, as well as the myriad immunoglobulin variable region genes. Light chains are classified as either kappa or lambda. Heavy chains are classified as gamma, mu, alpha, delta, or epsilon, which in turn define the immunoglobulin classes, IgG, IgM, IgA, IgD and IgE, respectively.

An exemplary immunoglobulin (antibody) structural unit comprises a tetramer. Each tetramer is composed of two identical pairs of polypeptide chains, each pair having one “light” (about 25 kDa) and one “heavy” chain (about 50-70 kDa). The N-terminus of each chain defines a variable region of about 100 to 110 or more amino acids primarily responsible for antigen recognition. The terms variable light chain (V_L) and variable heavy chain (V_H) refer to these light and heavy chains respectively.

A “chimeric antibody” is an antibody molecule in which (a) the constant region, or a portion thereof, is altered, replaced or exchanged so that the antigen binding site (variable region) is linked to a constant region of a different or altered class, effector function and/or species, or an entirely different molecule which confers new properties to the chimeric antibody, e.g., an enzyme, toxin, hormone, growth factor, drug, etc.; or (b) the variable region, or a portion thereof, is altered, replaced or exchanged with a variable region having a different or altered antigen specificity.

An “anti-T2R” antibody is an antibody or antibody fragment that specifically binds a polypeptide encoded by a T2R gene, cDNA, or a subsequence thereof.

The term “immunoassay” is an assay that uses an antibody to specifically bind an antigen. The immunoassay is characterized by the use of specific binding properties of a particular antibody to isolate, target, and/or quantify the antigen.

The phrase “specifically (or selectively) binds” to an antibody or, “specifically (or selectively) immunoreactive with,” when referring to a protein or peptide, refers to a binding reaction that is determinative of the presence of the protein in a heterogeneous population of proteins and other biologics. Thus, under designated immunoassay conditions, the specified antibodies bind to a particular protein at least two times

the background and do not substantially bind in a significant amount to other proteins present in the sample. Specific binding to an antibody under such conditions may require an antibody that is selected for its specificity for a particular protein.

For example, polyclonal antibodies raised to a T2R family member from specific species such as rat, mouse, or human can be selected to obtain only those polyclonal antibodies that are specifically immunoreactive with the T2R polypeptide or an immunogenic portion thereof and not with other proteins, except for orthologs or polymorphic variants and alleles of the T2R polypeptide. This selection may be achieved by subtracting out antibodies that cross-react with T2R molecules from other species or other T2R molecules. Antibodies can also be selected that recognize only T2R GPCR family members but not GPCRs from other families. A variety of immunoassay formats may be used to select antibodies specifically immunoreactive with a particular protein. For example, solid-phase ELISA immunoassays are routinely used to select antibodies specifically immunoreactive with a protein (see, e.g., Harlow & Lane, *Antibodies, A Laboratory Manual*, (1988), for a description of immunoassay formats and conditions that can be used to determine specific immunoreactivity). Typically a specific or selective reaction will be at least twice background signal or noise and more typically more than 10 to 100 times background.

The phrase "selectively associates with" refers to the ability of a nucleic acid to "selectively hybridize" with another as defined above, or the ability of an antibody to "selectively (or specifically) bind to a protein, as defined above.

The term "expression vector" refers to any recombinant expression system for the purpose of expressing a nucleic acid sequence of the invention in vitro or in vivo, constitutively or inducibly, in any cell, including prokaryotic, yeast, fungal, plant, insect or mammalian cell. The term includes linear or circular expression systems. The term includes expression systems that remain episomal or integrate into the host cell genome. The expression systems can have the ability to self-replicate or not, i.e., drive only transient expression in a cell. The term includes recombinant expression "cassettes which contain only the minimum elements needed for transcription of the recombinant nucleic acid.

By "host cell" is meant a cell that contains an expression vector and supports the replication or expression of the expression vector. Host cells may be prokaryotic cells such as *E. coli*, or eukaryotic cells such as yeast, insect, amphibian, or mammalian cells such as CHO, HeLa, HEK-293, and the like, e.g., cultured cells, explants, and cells in vivo.

Based on the foregoing, the present invention provides assays for identifying compounds that modulate, preferably block, the specific activation of the novel haplotype of hT2R50 and the previously identified human bitter taste receptor hT2R50 by bitter compounds, i.e., pyrazines and structurally related compounds. Particularly, the invention provides cell-based assays for identifying compounds that modulate (e.g., block) the activation of hT2R50 and its haplotype by bitter ligands. It is anticipated that these compounds will modulate bitter taste associated with the hT2R50 and potentially other T2R taste receptors in human subjects. This may be confirmed in taste tests.

That the subject hT2R50 haplotype and the original hT2R sequence specifically respond to bitter ligands, i.e., particular pyrazine compounds was determined using the HEK293 expression system and calcium imaging methods reported in other publications as well as patent applications filed by the present Assignee, e.g., U.S. Ser. No. 10/191,058 and 09/825, 882, both incorporated by reference in their entireties herein.

More particularly, the present inventors transfected HEK293 cells with the hT2R together with a chimeric G protein (G16 gust 44) which comprises the G_{α14} G protein sequence modified by the replacement of carboxy-44 amino acid residues with those of gustducin, and recorded responses of these cells to specific bitter ligands by calcium imaging methods.

As shown in FIG. 4, it was found that hT2R50 and its haplotype both responded to 2-acetylpyrazine and ethylpyrazine and that hT2R75 and hT2R61 did not respond to these compounds at the same concentration. Therefore, these cells or other cells that functionally express these hT2R50 receptor sequences may be used in assays to identify compounds that modulate activation of these receptors, e.g., compounds which block the activation of this receptor and its novel haplotype by pyrazines and other bitter ligands, preferably which block activation of these receptors by bitter ligands.

These identified compounds that block bitter taste associated with hT2R50 potentially may be used as additives to improve the palatability of foods or medicinals containing bitter tastants and thereby improve the properties thereof.

Preferably, the subject T2R assays will utilize a test cell that expresses a DNA encoding an hT2R having the amino acid sequence identified infra. However, it is anticipated that fragments, orthologs, variants or chimeras of this receptor polypeptide which retain the functional properties of the bitter taste receptor, i.e., respond to some bitter compounds, and will also be useful in these assays. Examples of such variants include splice variants, single nucleotide polymorphisms, allelic variants, and mutations produced by recombinant or chemical means, or naturally occurring. Means for isolation and expression of T2R5, which are used in the assays of the present invention and assays which are contemplated for use in the present invention to identify compounds that inhibit activation of these receptors, are set forth below.

Isolation and Expression of T2R5

Isolation and expression of the T2R5, or fragments or variants thereof, of the invention can be effected by well-established cloning procedures using probes or primers constructed based on the T2R nucleic acids sequences disclosed in the application. Related T2R sequences may also be identified from human or other species genomic databases using the sequences disclosed herein and known computer-based search technologies, e.g., BLAST sequence searching. In a particular embodiment, the pseudogenes disclosed herein can be used to identify functional alleles or related genes.

Expression vectors can then be used to infect or transfect host cells for the functional expression of these sequences. These genes and vectors can be made and expressed in vitro or in vivo. One of skill will recognize that desired phenotypes for altering and controlling nucleic acid expression can be obtained by modulating the expression or activity of the genes and nucleic acids (e.g., promoters, enhancers and the like) within the vectors of the invention. Any of the known methods described for increasing or decreasing expression or activity can be used. The invention can be practiced in conjunction with any method or protocol known in the art, which are well described in the scientific and patent literature.

Alternatively, these nucleic acids can be synthesized in vitro by well-known chemical synthesis techniques, as described in, e.g., Carruthers, *Cold Spring Harbor Symp. Quant. Biol.* 47:411-18 (1982); Adams, *Am. Chem. Soc.*, 105:661 (1983); Belousov, *Nucleic Acids Res.* 25:3440-3444 (1997); Frenkel, *Free Radic. Biol. Med.* 19:373-380 (1995); Blommers, *Biochemistry* 33:7886-7896 (1994); Narang, *Meth. Enzymol.* 68:90 (1979); Brown, *Meth. Enzymol.* 68:109 (1979); Beaucage, *Tetra. Lett.* 22:1859 (1981); U.S. Pat. No. 4,458,066. Double-stranded DNA fragments may

then be obtained either by synthesizing the complementary strand and annealing the strands together under appropriate conditions, or by adding the complementary strand using DNA polymerase with an appropriate primer sequence.

Techniques for the manipulation of nucleic acids, such as, for example, for generating mutations in sequences, subcloning, labeling probes, sequencing, hybridization and the like are well described in the scientific and patent literature. See, e.g., Sambrook, ed., *Molecular Cloning: A Laboratory Manual* (2nd ed.), Vols. 1-3, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory (1989); Ausubel, ed., *Current Protocols in Molecular Biology*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York (1997); Tijssen, ed., *Laboratory Techniques in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology: Hybridization With Nucleic Acid Probes, Part I, Theory and Nucleic Acid Preparation*, Elsevier, N.Y. (1993).

Nucleic acids, vectors, capsids, polypeptides, and the like can be analyzed and quantified by any of a number of general means well known to those of skill in the art. These include, e.g., analytical biochemical methods such as NMR, spectrophotometry, radiography, electrophoresis, capillary electrophoresis, high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC), thin layer chromatography (TLC), and hyperdiffusion chromatography, various immunological methods, e.g., fluid or gel precipitin reactions, immunodiffusion, immunoelectrophoresis, radioimmunoassays (RIAs), enzyme-linked immunosorbent assays (ELISAs), immunofluorescent assays, Southern analysis, Northern analysis, dot-blot analysis, gel electrophoresis (e.g., SDS-PAGE), RT-PCR, quantitative PCR, other nucleic acid or target or signal amplification methods, radiolabelling, scintillation counting, and affinity chromatography.

Oligonucleotide primers may be used to amplify nucleic acids encoding a T2R ligand-binding region. The nucleic acids described herein can also be cloned or measured quantitatively using amplification techniques. Amplification methods are also well known in the art, and include, e.g., polymerase chain reaction (PCR) (Innis ed., *PCR Protocols, a Guide to Methods and Applications*, Academic Press, N.Y. (1990); Innis ed., *PCR Strategies*, Academic Press, Inc., N.Y. (1995)); ligase chain reaction (LCR) (Wu, *Genomics*, 4:560 (1989); Landegren, *Science*, 241:1077 (1988); Barringer, *Gene*, 89:117 (1990)); transcription amplification (Kwoh, *PNAS*, 86:1173 (1989)); self-sustained sequence replication (Guatelli, *PNAS*, 87:1874 (1990)); Q Beta replicase amplification (Smith, *J. Clin. Microbiol.*, 35:1477-91 (1997)); automated Q-beta replicase amplification assay (Burg, *Mol. Cell. Probes*, 10:257-71 (1996)); and other RNA polymerase mediated techniques (e.g., NASBA, Cangene, Mississauga, Ontario). See also, Berger, *Methods Enzymol.*, 152:307-16 (1987); Sambrook; Ausubel; U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,683,195 and 4,683,202; Sookninan, *Biotechnology*, 13:563-64 (1995).

Once amplified, the nucleic acids, either individually or as libraries, may be cloned according to methods known in the art, if desired, into any of a variety of vectors using routine molecular biological methods; methods for cloning in vitro amplified nucleic acids are described, e.g., U.S. Pat. No. 5,426,039. To facilitate cloning of amplified sequences, restriction enzyme sites can be "built into" the PCR primer pair. For example, Pst I and Bsp E1 sites were designed into the exemplary primer pairs of the invention. These particular restriction sites have a sequence that, when ligated, are "in-frame" with respect to the 7-membrane receptor "donor" coding sequence into which they are spliced (the ligand-binding region coding sequence is internal to the 7-membrane polypeptide, thus, if it is desired that the construct be translated downstream of a restriction enzyme splice site, out of frame results should be avoided; this may not be necessary if

the inserted ligand-binding region comprises substantially most of the transmembrane VII region). The primers can be designed to retain the original sequence of the "donor" 7-membrane receptor. Alternatively, the primers can encode amino acid residues that are conservative substitutions (e.g., hydrophobic for hydrophobic residue, see above discussion) or functionally benign substitutions (e.g., do not prevent plasma membrane insertion, cause cleavage by peptidase, cause abnormal folding of receptor, and the like).

The primer pairs may be designed to selectively amplify ligand-binding regions of T2R proteins. These binding regions may vary for different ligands; thus, what may be a minimal binding region for one ligand, may be too limiting for a second potential ligand. Thus, binding regions of different sizes comprising different domain structures may be amplified; for example, transmembrane (TM) domains II through VII, III through VII, III through VI or II through VI, or variations thereof (e.g., only a subsequence of a particular domain, mixing the order of the domains, and the like), of a 7-transmembrane T2R.

As domain structures and sequence of many 7-membrane T2R proteins are known, the skilled artisan can readily select domain-flanking and internal domain sequences as model sequences to design degenerate amplification primer pairs. For example, a nucleic acid sequence encoding domain regions II through VII can be generated by PCR amplification using a primer pair. To amplify a nucleic acid comprising transmembrane domain I (TM I) sequence, a degenerate primer can be designed from a nucleic acid that encodes the amino acid sequence of the T2R family consensus sequence 1 described above. Such a degenerate primer can be used to generate a binding region incorporating TM I through TM III, TM I through TM IV, TM I through TM V, TM I through TM VI or TM I through TM VII). Other degenerate primers can be designed based on the other T2R family consensus sequences provided herein. Such a degenerate primer can be used to generate a binding region incorporating TM III through TM IV, TM III through TM V, TM III through TM VI or TM III through TM VII.

Paradigms to design degenerate primer pairs are well known in the art. For example, a Consensus-DEgenerate Hybrid Oligonucleotide Primer (CODEHOP) strategy computer program is accessible and is directly linked from the BlockMaker multiple sequence alignment site for hybrid primer prediction beginning with a set of related protein sequences, as known taste receptor ligand-binding regions (see, e.g., Rose, *Nucleic Acids Res.*, 26:1628-35 (1998); Singh, *Biotechniques*, 24:318-19 (1998)).

Means to synthesize oligonucleotide primer pairs are well known in the art. "Natural" base pairs or synthetic base pairs can be used. For example, use of artificial nucleobases offers a versatile approach to manipulate primer sequence and generate a more complex mixture of amplification products. Various families of artificial nucleobases are capable of assuming multiple hydrogen bonding orientations through internal bond rotations to provide a means for degenerate molecular recognition. Incorporation of these analogs into a single position of a PCR primer allows for generation of a complex library of amplification products. See, e.g., Hoops, *Nucleic Acids Res.*, 25:4866-71 (1997). Nonpolar molecules can also be used to mimic the shape of natural DNA bases. A non-hydrogen-bonding shape mimic for adenine can replicate efficiently and selectively against a nonpolar shape mimic for thymine (see, e.g., Morales, *Nat. Struct. Biol.*, 5:950-54 (1998)). For example, two degenerate bases can be the pyrimidine base 6H, 8H-3,4-dihydropyrimido[4,5-c][1,2]oxazin-7-one or the purine base N-6-methoxy-2,6-diaminopurine

(see, e.g., Hill, PNAS, 95:4258-63 (1998)). Exemplary degenerate primers of the invention incorporate the nucleobase analog 5'-Dimethoxytrityl-N-benzoyl-2'-deoxy-Cytidine, 3'-[(2-cyanoethyl)-(N,N-diisopropyl)]-phosphoramidite (the term "P" in the sequences, see above). This pyrimidine analog hydrogen bonds with purines, including A and G residues.

Polymorphic variants, alleles, and interspecies homologs that are substantially identical to a taste receptor disclosed herein can be isolated using the nucleic acid probes described above. Alternatively, expression libraries can be used to clone T2R polypeptides and polymorphic variants, alleles, and interspecies homologs thereof, by detecting expressed homologs immunologically with antisera or purified antibodies made against a T2R polypeptide, which also recognize and selectively bind to the T2R homolog.

Nucleic acids that encode ligand-binding regions of taste receptors may be generated by amplification (e.g., PCR) of appropriate nucleic acid sequences using appropriate (perfect or degenerate) primer pairs. The amplified nucleic acid can be genomic DNA from any cell or tissue or mRNA or cDNA derived from taste receptor-expressing cells.

In one embodiment, hybrid protein-coding sequences comprising nucleic acids encoding T2R5 fused to a translocation sequences may be constructed. Also provided are hybrid T2R5 comprising the translocation motifs and taste eliciting compound-binding regions of other families of chemosensory receptors, particularly taste receptors. These nucleic acid sequences can be operably linked to transcriptional or translational control elements, e.g., transcription and translation initiation sequences, promoters and enhancers, transcription and translation terminators, polyadenylation sequences, and other sequences useful for transcribing DNA into RNA. In construction of recombinant expression cassettes, vectors, and transgenics, a promoter fragment can be employed to direct expression of the desired nucleic acid in all desired cells or tissues.

In another embodiment, fusion proteins may include C-terminal or N-terminal translocation sequences. Further, fusion proteins can comprise additional elements, e.g., for protein detection, purification, or other applications. Detection and purification facilitating domains include, e.g., metal chelating peptides such as polyhistidine tracts, histidine-tryptophan modules, or other domains that allow purification on immobilized metals; maltose binding protein; protein A domains that allow purification on immobilized immunoglobulin; or the domain utilized in the FLAG extension/affinity purification system (Immunex Corp, Seattle Wash.).

The inclusion of a cleavable linker sequences such as Factor Xa (see, e.g., Ottavi, Biochimie, 80:289-93 (1998)), subtilisin protease recognition motif (see, e.g., Polyak, Protein Eng., 10:615-19 (1997)); enterokinase (Invitrogen, San Diego, Calif.), and the like, between the translocation domain (for efficient plasma membrane expression) and the rest of the newly translated polypeptide may be useful to facilitate purification. For example, one construct can include a polypeptide encoding a nucleic acid sequence linked to six histidine residues followed by a thioredoxin, an enterokinase cleavage site (see, e.g., Williams, Biochemistry, 34:1787-97 (1995)), and an C-terminal translocation domain. The histidine residues facilitate detection and purification while the enterokinase cleavage site provides a means for purifying the desired protein(s) from the remainder of the fusion protein. Technology pertaining to vectors encoding fusion proteins and application of fusion proteins are well described in the scientific and patent literature (see, e.g., Kroll, DNA Cell. Biol., 12:441-53 (1993)).

Expression vectors, either as individual expression vectors or as libraries of expression vectors, comprising the ligand-binding region encoding sequences may be introduced into a genome or into the cytoplasm or a nucleus of a cell and expressed by a variety of conventional techniques, well described in the scientific and patent literature. See, e.g., Roberts, Nature, 328:731 (1987); Berger supra; Schneider, Protein Exper. Purif., 6435:10 (1995); Sambrook; Tijssen; Ausubel. Product information from manufacturers of biological reagents and experimental equipment also provide information regarding known biological methods. The vectors can be isolated from natural sources, obtained from such sources as ATCC or GenBank libraries, or prepared by synthetic or recombinant methods.

The nucleic acids can be expressed in expression cassettes, vectors or viruses which are stably or transiently expressed in cells (e.g., episomal expression systems). Selection markers can be incorporated into expression cassettes and vectors to confer a selectable phenotype on transformed cells and sequences. For example, selection markers can code for episomal maintenance and replication such that integration into the host genome is not required. For example, the marker may encode antibiotic resistance (e.g., chloramphenicol, kanamycin, G418, bleomycin, hygromycin) or herbicide resistance (e.g., chlorosulfuron or Basta) to permit selection of those cells transformed with the desired DNA sequences (see, e.g., Blondelet-Rouault, Gene, 190:315-17 (1997); Aubrecht, J. Pharmacol. Exp. Ther., 281:992-97 (1997)). Because selectable marker genes conferring resistance to substrates like neomycin or hygromycin can only be utilized in tissue culture, chemoresistance genes are also used as selectable markers in vitro and in vivo.

A chimeric nucleic acid sequence may encode a T2R ligand-binding region within any 7-transmembrane polypeptide. Because 7-transmembrane receptor polypeptides have similar primary sequences and secondary and tertiary structures, structural domains (e.g., extracellular domain, TM domains, cytoplasmic domain, etc.) can be readily identified by sequence analysis. For example, homology modeling, Fourier analysis and helical periodicity detection can identify and characterize the seven domains with a 7-transmembrane receptor sequence. Fast Fourier Transform (FFT) algorithms can be used to assess the dominant periods that characterize profiles of the hydrophobicity and variability of analyzed sequences. Periodicity detection enhancement and alpha helical periodicity index can be done as by, e.g., Donnelly, Protein Sci., 2:55-70 (1993). Other alignment and modeling algorithms are well known in the art (see, e.g., Peitsch, Receptors Channels, 4:161-64 (1996); Kyte & Doolittle, J. Md. Biol., 157:105-32 (1982); and Cronet, Protein Eng., 6:59-64 (1993)).

The present invention also includes not only the nucleic acid molecules and polypeptides having the specified nucleic acid and amino acid sequences, but also fragments thereof, particularly fragments of, e.g., 40, 60, 80, 100, 150, 200, or 250 nucleotides, or more, as well as polypeptide fragments of, e.g., 10, 20, 30, 50, 70, 100, or 150 amino acids, or more. Optionally, the nucleic acid fragments can encode an antigenic polypeptide that is capable of binding to an antibody raised against a T2R family member. Further, a protein fragment of the invention can optionally be an antigenic fragment that is capable of binding to an antibody raised against a T2R family member.

Also contemplated are chimeric proteins, comprising at least 10, 20, 30, 50, 70, 100, or 150 amino acids, or more, of one of at least one of the T2R polypeptides described herein, coupled to additional amino acids representing all or part of

another GPCR, preferably a member of the 7 transmembrane superfamily. These chimeras can be made from the instant receptors and another GPCR, or they can be made by combining two or more of the present receptors. In one embodiment, one portion of the chimera corresponds to, or is derived from the transmembrane domain of a T2R polypeptide of the invention.

In another embodiment, one portion of the chimera corresponds to, or is derived from the one or more of the transmembrane regions of a T2R polypeptide described herein, and the remaining portion or portions can come from another GPCR. Chimeric receptors are well known in the art, and the techniques for creating them and the selection and boundaries of domains or fragments of G Protein-Coupled Receptors for incorporation therein are also well known. Thus, this knowledge of those skilled in the art can readily be used to create such chimeric receptors. The use of such chimeric receptors can provide, for example, a taste selectivity characteristic of one of the receptors specifically disclosed herein, coupled with the signal transduction characteristics of another receptor, such as a well known receptor used in prior art assay systems.

For example, a region such as a ligand-binding region, an extracellular domain, a transmembrane domain, a transmembrane domain, a cytoplasmic domain, an N-terminal domain, a C-terminal domain, or any combination thereof, can be covalently linked to a heterologous protein. For instance, a T2R transmembrane region can be linked to a heterologous GPCR transmembrane domain, or a heterologous GPCR extracellular domain can be linked to a T2R transmembrane region. Other heterologous proteins of choice can include, e.g., green fluorescent protein, .beta.-gal, glutamate receptor, and the rhodopsin N-terminus.

Also within the scope of the invention are host cells for expressing the T2R5, fragments, or variants of the invention. To obtain high levels of expression of a cloned gene or nucleic acid, such as cDNAs encoding the T2R5, fragments, or variants of the invention, one of skill typically subclones the nucleic acid sequence of interest into an expression vector that contains a strong promoter to direct transcription, a transcription/translation terminator, and if for a nucleic acid encoding a protein, a ribosome binding site for translational initiation. Suitable bacterial promoters are well known in the art and described, e.g., in Sambrook et al. However, bacterial or eukaryotic expression systems can be used.

Any of the well-known procedures for introducing foreign nucleotide sequences into host cells may be used. These include the use of calcium phosphate transfection, polybrene, protoplast fusion, electroporation, liposomes, microinjection, plasma vectors, viral vectors and any of the other well known methods for introducing cloned genomic DNA, cDNA, synthetic DNA or other foreign genetic material into a host cell (see, e.g., Sambrook et al.) It is only necessary that the particular genetic engineering procedure used be capable of successfully introducing at least one nucleic acid molecule into the host cell capable of expressing the T2R, fragment, or variant of interest.

After the expression vector is introduced into the cells, the transfected cells are cultured under conditions favoring expression of the receptor, fragment, or variant of interest, which is then recovered from the culture using standard techniques. Examples of such techniques are well known in the art. See, e.g., WO 00/06593, which is incorporated by reference in a manner consistent with this disclosure.

Assays for Detection of Compounds That Modulate the Activity of the T2R Haplotype According to the Invention

Methods and compositions for determining whether a test compound specifically binds to the T2R haplotype polypeptide of the invention, both in vitro and in vivo are described below. Many aspects of cell physiology can be monitored to assess the effect of ligand-binding to a naturally occurring or chimeric T2R5. These assays may be performed on intact cells expressing a T2R polypeptide, on permeabilized cells, or on membrane fractions produced by standard methods.

Taste receptors bind taste eliciting compounds and initiate the transduction of chemical stimuli into electrical signals. An activated or inhibited G protein will in turn alter the properties of target enzymes, channels, and other effector proteins. Some examples are the activation of cGMP phosphodiesterase by transducin in the visual system, adenylate cyclase by the stimulatory G protein, phospholipase C by Gq and other cognate G proteins, and modulation of diverse channels by Gi and other G proteins. Downstream consequences can also be examined such as generation of diacyl glycerol and IP3 by phospholipase C, and in turn, for calcium mobilization by IP3.

The hT2R50 proteins or polypeptides of the assay will typically be selected from a polypeptide having a sequence contained in SEQ ID NO: 3 or a fragment or conservatively modified variant thereof.

Alternatively, the T2R proteins or polypeptides of the assay can be derived from a eukaryotic host cell, and can include an amino acid sequence having amino acid sequence identity to SEQ ID NO:3 or conservatively modified variants thereof. Generally, the amino acid sequence identity will be at least 30% preferably 30-40%, more specifically 50-60, 70%, 75%, 80%, 85%, 90%, 95%, 96%, 97%, 98%, or 99%. Optionally, the T2R proteins or polypeptides of the assays can comprise a region of a T2R polypeptide, such as an extracellular domain, transmembrane region, cytoplasmic domain, ligand-binding domain, and the like. Optionally, the T2R polypeptide, or a portion thereof, can be covalently linked to a heterologous protein to create a chimeric protein used in the assays described herein.

Modulators of T2R activity may be tested using T2R proteins or polypeptides as described above, either recombinant or naturally occurring. The T2R proteins or polypeptides can be isolated, expressed in a cell, expressed in a membrane derived from a cell, expressed in tissue or in an animal, either recombinant or naturally occurring. For example, tongue slices, dissociated cells from a tongue, transformed cells, or membranes can be used. Modulation can be tested using one of the in vitro or in vivo assays described herein.

Detection of Modulators

Compositions and methods for determining whether a test compound specifically binds to a hT2R50 receptor of the invention, both in vitro and in vivo, are described below. Many aspects of cell physiology can be monitored to assess the effect of ligand binding to a T2R polypeptide of the invention. These assays may be performed on intact cells expressing a chemosensory receptor, on permeabilized cells, or on membrane fractions produced by standard methods or in vitro using de novo synthesized proteins.

In vivo, taste receptors bind to taste modulatory compounds and initiate the transduction of chemical stimuli into electrical signals. An activated or inhibited G protein will in turn alter the properties of target enzymes, channels, and other effector proteins. Some examples are the activation of cGMP phosphodiesterase by transducin in the visual system, adenylate cyclase by the stimulatory G protein, phospholipase C by Gq and other cognate G proteins, and modulation of diverse channels by Gi and other G proteins. Downstream

consequences can also be examined such as generation of diacyl glycerol and IP3 by phospholipase C, and in turn, for calcium mobilization by IP3.

Alternatively, the T2R proteins or polypeptides of the assay can be derived from a eukaryotic host cell and can include an amino acid subsequence having amino acid sequence identity to the T2R polypeptides disclosed herein, or fragments or conservatively modified variants thereof. Generally, the amino acid sequence identity will be at least 35 to 50%, or optionally 75%, 85%, 90%, 95%, 96%, 97%, 98%, or 99%. Optionally, the T2R proteins or polypeptides of the assays can comprise a domain of a T2R protein, such as an extracellular domain, transmembrane region, transmembrane domain, cytoplasmic domain, ligand-binding domain, and the like. Further, as described above, the T2R protein or a domain thereof can be covalently linked to a heterologous protein to create a chimeric protein used in the assays described herein.

Modulators of T2R receptor activity are tested using T2R proteins or polypeptides as described above, either recombinant or naturally occurring. The T2R proteins or polypeptides can be isolated, expressed in a cell, expressed in a membrane derived from a cell, expressed in tissue or in an animal, either recombinant or naturally occurring. For example, tongue slices, dissociated cells from a tongue, transformed cells, or membranes can be used. Modulation can be tested using one of the in vitro or in vivo assays described herein.

1. In vitro Binding Assays

Taste transduction can also be examined in vitro with soluble or solid state reactions, using the T2R polypeptides of the invention. In a particular embodiment, T2R ligand-binding domains can be used in vitro in soluble or solid state reactions to assay for ligand binding.

It is possible that the ligand-binding domain may be formed by the N-terminal domain together with additional portions of the extracellular domain, such as the extracellular loops of the transmembrane domain.

In vitro binding assays have been used with other GPCRs, such as the metabotropic glutamate receptors (see, e.g., Han and Hampson, *J. Biol. Chem.* 274:10008-10013 (1999)). These assays might involve displacing a radioactively or fluorescently labeled ligand, measuring changes in intrinsic fluorescence or changes in proteolytic susceptibility, etc.

Ligand binding to a T2R polypeptide according to the invention can be tested in solution, in a bilayer membrane, optionally attached to a solid phase, in a lipid monolayer, or in vesicles. Binding of a modulator can be tested using, e.g., changes in spectroscopic characteristics (e.g., fluorescence, absorbance, refractive index) hydrodynamic (e.g., shape), chromatographic, or solubility properties.

In a preferred embodiment of the invention, a $[^{35}\text{S}]\text{GTP}\gamma\text{S}$ binding assay is used. As described above, upon activation of a GPCR, the $G\alpha$ subunit of the G protein complex is stimulated to exchange bound GDP for GTP. Ligand-mediated stimulation of G protein exchange activity can be measured in a biochemical assay measuring the binding of added radioactively labeled $[^{35}\text{S}]\text{GTP}\gamma\text{S}$ to the G protein in the presence of a putative ligand. Typically, membranes containing the chemosensory receptor of interest are mixed with a G protein. Potential inhibitors and/or activators and $[^{35}\text{S}]\text{GTP}\gamma\text{S}$ are added to the assay, and binding of $[^{35}\text{S}]\text{GTP}\gamma\text{S}$ to the G protein is measured. Binding can be measured by liquid scintillation counting or by any other means known in the art, including scintillation proximity assays (SPA). In other assays formats, fluorescently labeled GTP γ S can be utilized.

2. Fluorescence Polarization Assays

In another embodiment, Fluorescence Polarization ("FP") based assays may be used to detect and monitor ligand bind-

ing. Fluorescence polarization is a versatile laboratory technique for measuring equilibrium binding, nucleic acid hybridization, and enzymatic activity. Fluorescence polarization assays are homogeneous in that they do not require a separation step such as centrifugation, filtration, chromatography, precipitation, or electrophoresis. These assays are done in real time, directly in solution and do not require an immobilized phase. Polarization values can be measured repeatedly and after the addition of reagents since measuring the polarization is rapid and does not destroy the sample. Generally, this technique can be used to measure polarization values of fluorophores from low picomolar to micromolar levels. This section describes how fluorescence polarization can be used in a simple and quantitative way to measure the binding of ligands to the T2R polypeptides of the invention.

When a fluorescently labeled molecule is excited with plane polarized light, it emits light that has a degree of polarization that is inversely proportional to its molecular rotation. Large fluorescently labeled molecules remain relatively stationary during the excited state (4 nanoseconds in the case of fluorescein) and the polarization of the light remains relatively constant between excitation and emission. Small fluorescently labeled molecules rotate rapidly during the excited state and the polarization changes significantly between excitation and emission. Therefore, small molecules have low polarization values and large molecules have high polarization values. For example, a single-stranded fluorescein-labeled oligonucleotide has a relatively low polarization value but when it is hybridized to a complementary strand, it has a higher polarization value. When using FP to detect and monitor taste eliciting compound-binding which may activate or inhibit the chemosensory receptors of the invention, fluorescence-labeled taste eliciting compounds or auto-fluorescent taste eliciting compounds may be used.

Fluorescence polarization (P) is defined as:
$$P = \frac{I_{\text{parallel}} - I_{\text{perpendicular}}}{I_{\text{parallel}} + I_{\text{perpendicular}}}$$

Where I_{parallel} is the intensity of the emission light parallel to the excitation light plane and $I_{\text{perpendicular}}$ is the intensity of the emission light perpendicular to the excitation light plane. P, being a ratio of light intensities, is a dimensionless number. For example, the Beacon and Beacon 2000 System may be used in connection with these assays. Such systems typically express polarization in millipolarization units (1 Polarization Unit=1000 mP Units).

The relationship between molecular rotation and size is described by the Perrin equation and the reader is referred to Jolley, M. E. (1991) in *Journal of Analytical Toxicology*, pp. 236-240, which gives a thorough explanation of this equation. Summarily, the Perrin equation states that polarization is directly proportional to the rotational relaxation time, the time that it takes a molecule to rotate through an angle of approximately 68.5 degrees. Rotational relaxation time is related to viscosity (η), absolute temperature (T), molecular volume (V), and the gas constant (R) by the following equation:
$$2 \text{ Rotational Relaxation Time} = 3 \frac{\eta V}{RT}$$

The rotational relaxation time is small (approximately 1 nanosecond) for small molecules (e.g. fluorescein) and large (approximately 100 nanoseconds) for large molecules (e.g. immunoglobulins). If viscosity and temperature are held constant, rotational relaxation time, and therefore polarization, is directly related to the molecular volume. Changes in molecular volume may be due to interactions with other molecules, dissociation, polymerization, degradation, hybridization, or conformational changes of the fluorescently labeled molecule. For example, fluorescence polarization has been used to measure enzymatic cleavage of large fluorescein labeled polymers by proteases, DNases, and RNases. It also has been

used to measure equilibrium binding for protein/protein interactions, antibody/antigen binding, and protein/DNA binding.

A. Solid State and Soluble High Throughput Assays

In yet another embodiment, the invention provides soluble assays using a T2R polypeptide; or a cell or tissue expressing a T2R polypeptide. In another embodiment, the invention provides solid phase based in vitro assays in a high throughput format, where the T2R polypeptide, or cell or tissue expressing the T2R polypeptide is attached to a solid phase substrate or a taste stimulating compound and contacted with a T2R receptor, and binding detected using an appropriate tag or antibody raised against the T2R receptor.

In the high throughput assays of the invention, it is possible to screen up to several thousand different modulators or ligands in a single day. In particular, each well of a microtiter plate can be used to run a separate assay against a selected potential modulator, or, if concentration or incubation time effects are to be observed, every 5-10 wells can test a single modulator. Thus, a single standard microtiter plate can assay about 100 (e.g., 96) modulators. If 1536 well plates are used, then a single plate can easily assay from about 1000 to about 1500 different compounds. It is also possible to assay multiple compounds in each plate well. It is possible to assay several different plates per day; assay screens for up to about 6,000-20,000 different compounds is possible using the integrated systems of the invention. More recently, microfluidic approaches to reagent manipulation have been developed.

The molecule of interest can be bound to the solid state component, directly or indirectly, via covalent or non-covalent linkage, e.g., via a tag. The tag can be any of a variety of components. In general, a molecule which binds the tag (a tag binder) is fixed to a solid support, and the tagged molecule of interest (e.g., the taste transduction molecule of interest) is attached to the solid support by interaction of the tag and the tag binder.

A number of tags and tag binders can be used, based upon known molecular interactions well described in the literature. For example, where a tag has a natural binder, for example, biotin, protein A, or protein G, it can be used in conjunction with appropriate tag binders (avidin, streptavidin, neutravidin, the Fc region of an immunoglobulin, etc.). Antibodies to molecules with natural binders such as biotin are also widely available and appropriate tag binders (see, SIGMA Immunochemicals 1998 catalogue SIGMA, St. Louis Mo.).

Similarly, any haptenic or antigenic compound can be used in combination with an appropriate antibody to form a tag/tag binder pair. Thousands of specific antibodies are commercially available and many additional antibodies are described in the literature. For example, in one common configuration, the tag is a first antibody and the tag binder is a second antibody which recognizes the first antibody. In addition to antibody-antigen interactions, receptor-ligand interactions are also appropriate as tag and tag-binder pairs. For example, agonists and antagonists of cell membrane receptors (e.g., cell receptor-ligand interactions such as transferrin, c-kit, viral receptor ligands, cytokine receptors, chemokine receptors, interleukin receptors, immunoglobulin receptors and antibodies, the cadherin family, the integrin family, the selectin family, and the like; see, e.g., Pigott & Power, *The Adhesion Molecule Facts Book I* (1993)). Similarly, toxins and venoms, viral epitopes, hormones (e.g., opiates, steroids, etc.), intracellular receptors (e.g., which mediate the effects of various small ligands, including steroids, thyroid hormone, retinoids and vitamin D; peptides), drugs, lectins, sugars, nucleic acids (both linear and cyclic polymer configurations), oligosaccharides, proteins, phospholipids and antibodies can all interact with various cell receptors.

Synthetic polymers, such as polyurethanes, polyesters, polycarbonates, polyureas, polyamides, polyethyleneimines, polyarylene sulfides, polysiloxanes, polyimides, and polyacetates can also form an appropriate tag or tag binder. Many other tag/tag binder pairs are also useful in assay systems described herein, as would be apparent to one of skill upon review of this disclosure.

Common linkers such as peptides, polyethers, and the like can also serve as tags, and include polypeptide sequences, such as poly gly sequences of between about 5 and 200 amino acids. Such flexible linkers are known to persons of skill in the art. For example, poly(ethylene glycol) linkers are available from Shearwater Polymers, Inc. Huntsville, Ala. These linkers optionally have amide linkages, sulfhydryl linkages, or heterofunctional linkages.

Tag binders are fixed to solid substrates using any of a variety of methods currently available. Solid substrates are commonly derivatized or functionalized by exposing all or a portion of the substrate to a chemical reagent which fixes a chemical group to the surface which is reactive with a portion of the tag binder. For example, groups which are suitable for attachment to a longer chain portion would include amines, hydroxyl, thiol, and carboxyl groups. Aminoalkylsilanes and hydroxyalkylsilanes can be used to functionalize a variety of surfaces, such as glass surfaces. The construction of such solid phase biopolymer arrays is well described in the literature. See, e.g., Merrifield, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 85:2149-2154 (1963) (describing solid phase synthesis of, e.g., peptides); Geysen et al., *J. Immun. Meth.*, 102:259-274 (1987) (describing synthesis of solid phase components on pins); Frank & Doring, *Tetrahedron*, 44:60316040 (1988) (describing synthesis of various peptide sequences on cellulose disks); Fodor et al., *Science*, 251:767-777 (1991); Sheldon et al., *Clinical Chemistry*, 39(4):718-719 (1993); and Kozal et al., *Nature Medicine*, 2(7):753759 (1996) (all describing arrays of biopolymers fixed to solid substrates). Non-chemical approaches for fixing tag binders to substrates include other common methods, such as heat, cross-linking by UV radiation, and the like.

3. Cell-Based Assays

In one preferred embodiment, a T2R protein is expressed in a eukaryotic cell either in unmodified forms or as chimeric, variant or truncated receptors with or preferably without a heterologous, chaperone sequence that facilitates its maturation and targeting through the secretory pathway. Such T2R polypeptides can be expressed in any eukaryotic cell, such as HEK-293 cells. Preferably, the cells comprise a functional G protein, e.g., G_{α15}, that is capable of coupling the chimeric receptor to an intracellular signaling pathway or to a signaling protein such as phospholipase C. Activation of T2R receptors in such cells can be detected using any standard method, such as by detecting changes in intracellular calcium by detecting FURA-2 dependent fluorescence in the cell. Such an assay is the basis of the experimental findings presented in this application.

Activated GPCR receptors often are substrates for kinases that phosphorylate the C-terminal tail of the receptor (and possibly other sites as well). Thus, activators will promote the transfer of ³²P from radiolabeled ATP to the receptor, which can be assayed with a scintillation counter. The phosphorylation of the C-terminal tail will promote the binding of arrestin-like proteins and will interfere with the binding of G proteins. For a general review of GPCR signal transduction and methods of assaying signal transduction, see, e.g., *Methods in Enzymology*, vols. 237 and 238 (1994) and volume 96

(1983); Bourne et al., *Nature*, 10:349:117-27 (1991); Bourne et al., *Nature*, 348:125-32 (1990); Pitcher et al., *Annu. Rev. Biochem.*, 67:653-92 (1998).

T2R modulation may be assayed by comparing the response of T2R polypeptides treated with a putative T2R modulator to the response of an untreated control sample or a sample containing a known "positive" control. Such putative T2R modulators can include molecules that either inhibit or activate T2R polypeptide activity. In one embodiment, control samples treated with a compound that activates the T2R are assigned a relative T2R activity value of 100. Inhibition of a T2R polypeptide is achieved when the T2R activity value relative to the control sample is about 90%, optionally 50%, optionally 25-0%. Activation of a T2R polypeptide is achieved when the T2R activity value relative to the control is 110%, optionally 150%, 200-500%, or 1000-2000%.

Changes in ion flux may be assessed by determining changes in ionic polarization (i.e., electrical potential) of the cell or membrane expressing a T2R polypeptide. One means to determine changes in cellular polarization is by measuring changes in current (thereby measuring changes in polarization) with voltage-clamp and patch-clamp techniques (see, e.g., the "cell-attached" mode, the "inside-out" mode, and the "whole cell" mode, e.g., Ackerman et al., *New Engl. J. Med.*, 336:1575-1595 (1997)). Whole cell currents are conveniently determined using the standard. Other known assays include: radiolabeled ion flux assays and fluorescence assays using voltage-sensitive dyes (see, e.g., Vestergarrd-Bogind et al., *J. Membrane Biol.*, 88:67-75 (1988); Gonzales & Tsien, *Chem. Biol.*, 4:269-277 (1997); Daniel et al., *J. Pharmacol. Meth.*, 25:185-193 (1991); Holevinsky et al., *J. Membrane Biology*, 137:59-70 (1994)).

The effects of the test compounds upon the function of the polypeptides can be measured by examining any of the parameters described above. Any suitable physiological change that affects GPCR activity can be used to assess the influence of a test compound on the polypeptides of this invention. When the functional consequences are determined using intact cells or animals, one can also measure a variety of effects such as transmitter release, hormone release, transcriptional changes to both known and uncharacterized genetic markers (e.g., northern blots), changes in cell metabolism such as cell growth or pH changes, and changes in intracellular second messengers such as Ca^{sup}.2+, IP3, cGMP, or cAMP.

Preferred assays for GPCRs include cells that are loaded with ion or voltage sensitive dyes to report receptor activity. Assays for determining activity of such receptors can also use known agonists and antagonists for other G protein-coupled receptors as controls to assess activity of tested compounds. In assays for identifying modulatory compounds (e.g., agonists, antagonists), changes in the level of ions in the cytoplasm or membrane voltage will be monitored using an ion sensitive or membrane voltage fluorescent indicator, respectively. Among the ion-sensitive indicators and voltage probes that may be employed are those disclosed in the *Molecular Probes 1997 Catalog*. For G protein-coupled receptors, promiscuous G proteins such as G_{α15} and G_{α16} can be used in the assay of choice (Wilkie et al., *Proc. Nat'l Acad. Sci.*, 88:10049-10053 (1991)).

Receptor activation initiates subsequent intracellular events, e.g., increases in second messengers. Activation of some G protein-coupled receptors stimulates the formation of inositol triphosphate (IP3) through phospholipase C-mediated hydrolysis of phosphatidylinositol (Berridge & Irvine, *Nature*, 312:315-21 (1984)). IP3 in turn stimulates the release of intracellular calcium ion stores. Thus, a change in cyto-

plasmic calcium ion levels, or a change in second messenger levels such as IP3 can be used to assess G protein-coupled receptor function. Cells expressing such G protein-coupled receptors may exhibit increased cytoplasmic calcium levels as a result of contribution from both calcium release from intracellular stores and extracellular calcium entry via plasma membrane ion channels.

In a preferred embodiment, T2R polypeptide activity is measured by expressing T2R gene in a heterologous cell with a promiscuous G protein that links the receptor to a phospholipase C signal transduction pathway (see Offermanns & Simon, *J. Biol. Chem.*, 270:15175-15180 (1995)). Optionally the cell line is HEK-293 (which does not normally express T2R genes) and the promiscuous G protein is G_{α15} (Offermanns & Simon, *supra*). Modulation of taste transduction is assayed by measuring changes in intracellular Ca²⁺ levels, which change in response to modulation of the T2R signal transduction pathway via administration of a molecule that associates with the T2R polypeptide. Changes in Ca²⁺ levels are optionally measured using fluorescent Ca²⁺ indicator dyes and fluorometric imaging.

In another embodiment, phosphatidyl inositol (PI) hydrolysis can be analyzed according to U.S. Pat. No. 5,436,128, herein incorporated by reference. Briefly, the assay involves labeling of cells with 3H-myoinositol for 48 or more hrs. The labeled cells are treated with a test compound for one hour. The treated cells are lysed and extracted in chloroform-methanol-water after which the inositol phosphates were separated by ion exchange chromatography and quantified by scintillation counting. Fold stimulation is determined by calculating the ratio of cpm in the presence of agonist, to cpm in the presence of buffer control. Likewise, fold inhibition is determined by calculating the ratio of cpm in the presence of antagonist, to cpm in the presence of buffer control (which may or may not contain an agonist).

Other receptor assays can involve determining the level of intracellular cyclic nucleotides, e.g., cAMP or cGMP. In cases where activation of the receptor results in a decrease in cyclic nucleotide levels, it may be preferable to expose the cells to agents that increase intracellular cyclic nucleotide levels, e.g., forskolin, prior to adding a receptor-activating compound to the cells in the assay. In one embodiment, the changes in intracellular cAMP or cGMP can be measured using immunoassays. The method described in Offermanns & Simon, *J. Bio. Chem.*, 270:15175-15180 (1995), may be used to determine the level of cAMP. Also, the method described in Felley-Bosco et al., *Am. J. Resp. Cell and Mol. Biol.*, 11:159-164 (1994), may be used to determine the level of cGMP. Further, an assay kit for measuring cAMP and/or cGMP is described in U.S. Pat. No. 4,115,538, herein incorporated by reference.

In another embodiment, transcription levels can be measured to assess the effects of a test compound on signal transduction. A host cell containing T2R polypeptide of interest is contacted with a test compound for a sufficient time to effect any interactions, and then the level of gene expression is measured. The amount of time to effect such interactions may be empirically determined, such as by running a time course and measuring the level of transcription as a function of time. The amount of transcription may be measured by using any method known to those of skill in the art to be suitable. For example, mRNA expression of the protein of interest may be detected using northern blots or their polypeptide products may be identified using immunoassays. Alternatively, transcription based assays using reporter gene may be used as described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,436,128, herein incorporated by reference. The reporter genes can be, e.g.,

chloramphenicol acetyltransferase, luciferase, beta-galactosidase beta-lactamase and alkaline phosphatase. Furthermore, the protein of interest can be used as an indirect reporter via attachment to a second reporter such as green fluorescent protein (see, e.g., Mistili & Spector, *Nature Biotechnology*, 15:961-964 (1997)).

The amount of transcription is then compared to the amount of transcription in either the same cell in the absence of the test compound, or it may be compared with the amount of transcription in a substantially identical cell that lacks the T2R polypeptide(s) of interest. A substantially identical cell may be derived from the same cells from which the recombinant cell was prepared but which had not been modified by introduction of heterologous DNA. Any difference in the amount of transcription indicates that the test compound has in some manner altered the activity of the hT2R50 polypeptide of interest.

4. Transgenic Non-human Animals Expressing Chemosensory Receptors

Non-human animals expressing one or more taste receptor sequences of the invention can also be used for receptor assays. Such expression can be used to determine whether a test compound specifically binds to a mammalian taste transmembrane receptor complex in vivo by contacting a non-human animal stably or transiently transfected with nucleic acids encoding chemosensory receptors or ligand-binding regions thereof with a test compound and determining whether the animal reacts to the test compound by specifically binding to the receptor polypeptide complex.

Animals transfected or infected with the vectors of the invention are particularly useful for assays to identify and characterize taste stimuli that can bind to a specific or sets of receptors. Such vector-infected animals expressing human taste receptor sequences can be used for in vivo screening of taste stimuli and their effect on, e.g., cell physiology (e.g., on taste neurons), on the CNS, or behavior.

Means to infect/express the nucleic acids and vectors, either individually or as libraries, are well known in the art. A variety of individual cell, organ, or whole animal parameters can be measured by a variety of means. The T2R sequences of the invention can be for example expressed in animal taste tissues by delivery with an infecting agent, e.g., adenovirus expression vector.

The endogenous taste receptor genes can remain functional and wild-type (native) activity can still be present. In other situations, where it is desirable that all taste receptor activity is by the introduced exogenous hybrid receptor, use of a knockout line is preferred. Methods for the construction of non-human transgenic animals, particularly transgenic mice, and the selection and preparation of recombinant constructs for generating transformed cells are well known in the art.

Construction of a "knockout" cell and animal is based on the premise that the level of expression of a particular gene in a mammalian cell can be decreased or completely abrogated by introducing into the genome a new DNA sequence that serves to interrupt some portion of the DNA sequence of the gene to be suppressed. Also, "gene trap insertion" can be used to disrupt a host gene, and mouse embryonic stem (ES) cells can be used to produce knockout transgenic animals (see, e.g., Holzschu, *Transgenic Res* 6:97-106 (1997)). The insertion of the exogenous is typically by homologous recombination between complementary nucleic acid sequences. The exogenous sequence is some portion of the target gene to be modified, such as exonic, intronic or transcriptional regulatory sequences, or any genomic sequence which is able to affect the level of the target gene's expression; or a combination thereof. Gene targeting via homologous recombination

in pluripotential embryonic stem cells allows one to modify precisely the genomic sequence of interest. Any technique can be used to create, screen for, propagate, a knockout animal, e.g., see Bijvoet, *Hum. Mol. Genet.* 7:53-62 (1998); Meredith, *J. Mol. Med.* 75:208-216 (1997); Tojo, *Cytotechnology* 19:161-165 (1995); Mudgett, *Methods Mol. Biol.* 48:167-184 (1995); Longo, *Transgenic Res.* 6:321-328 (1997); U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,616,491; 5,464,764; 5,631,153; 5,487,992; 5,627,059; 5,272,071; WO 91/09955; WO 93/09222; WO 96/29411; WO 95/31560; WO 91/12650.

The nucleic acids of the invention can also be used as reagents to produce "knockout" human cells and their progeny. Likewise, the nucleic acids of the invention can also be used as reagents to produce "knock-ins" in mice. The human or rat T2R gene sequences can replace the orthologs T2R in the mouse genome. In this way, a mouse expressing a human or rat T2R is produced. This mouse can then be used to analyze the function of human or rat T2R5, and to identify ligands for such T2R5.

20 Modulators

The compounds tested as modulators of a T2R family member can be any small chemical compound, or a biological entity, such as a protein, sugar, nucleic acid or lipid. Alternatively, modulators can be genetically altered versions of a T2R family member. Typically, test compounds may be small chemical molecules and peptides. Essentially any chemical compound can be used as a potential modulator or ligand in the assays of the invention, although most often compounds can be dissolved in aqueous or organic (especially DMSO-based) solutions are used. The assays may be designed to screen large chemical libraries by automating the assay steps and providing compounds from any convenient source to assays, which are typically run in parallel (e.g., in microtiter formats on microtiter plates in robotic assays). It will be appreciated that there are many suppliers of chemical compounds, including Sigma (St. Louis, Mo.), Aldrich (St. Louis, Mo.), Sigma-Aldrich (St. Louis, Mo.), Fluka Chemika-Biochemica Analytika (Buchs, Switzerland) and the like.

In one embodiment, high throughput screening methods involve providing a combinatorial chemical or peptide library containing a large number of potential therapeutic compounds (potential modulator or ligand compounds). Such "combinatorial chemical libraries" or "ligand libraries" are then screened in one or more assays, as described herein, to identify those library members (particular chemical species or subclasses) that display a desired characteristic activity. The compounds thus identified can serve as conventional "lead compounds" or can themselves be used as potential or actual consumer products.

A combinatorial chemical library is a collection of diverse chemical compounds generated by either chemical synthesis or biological synthesis, by combining a number of chemical "building blocks" such as reagents. For example, a linear combinatorial chemical library such as a polypeptide library is formed by combining a set of chemical building blocks (amino acids) in every possible way for a given compound length (i.e., the number of amino acids in a polypeptide compound). Millions of chemical compounds can be synthesized through such combinatorial mixing of chemical building blocks.

Preparation and screening of combinatorial chemical libraries is well known to those of skill in the art. Such combinatorial chemical libraries include, but are not limited to, peptide libraries (see, e.g., U.S. Pat. No. 5,010,175, Furka, *Int. J. Pept. Prot. Res.*, 37:487-93 (1991) and Houghton et al., *Nature*, 354:84-88 (1991)). Other chemistries for generating chemical diversity libraries can also be used. Such chemis-

tries include, but are not limited to: peptoids (e.g., WO 91/19735), encoded peptides (e.g., WO 93/20242), random bio-oligomers (e.g., WO 92/00091), benzodiazepines (e.g., U.S. Pat. No. 5,288,514), diversomers such as hydantoins, benzodiazepines and dipeptides (Hobbs et al., PNAS., 90:6909-13 (1993)), vinylogous polypeptides (Hagihara et al., J. Amer. Chem. Soc., 114:6568 (1992)), nonpeptidic peptidomimetics with glucose scaffolding (Hirschmann et al., J. Amer. Chem. Soc., 114:9217-18 (1992)), analogous organic syntheses of small compound libraries (Chen et al., J. Amer. Chem. Soc., 116:2661 (1994)), oligocarbamates (Cho et al., Science, 261:1303 (1993)), peptidyl phosphonates (Campbell et al., J. Org. Chem., 59:658 (1994)), nucleic acid libraries (Ausubel, Berger, and Sambrook, all supra), peptide nucleic acid libraries (U.S. Pat. No. 5,539,083), antibody libraries (Vaughn et al., Nature Biotechnology, 14(3):309-14 (1996) and PCT/US96/10287), carbohydrate libraries (Liang et al., Science, 274:1520-22 (1996) and U.S. Pat. No. 5,593,853), small organic molecule libraries (benzodiazepines, Baum, C&EN, Jan 18, page 33 (1993); thiazolidinones and metathiazanones, U.S. Pat. No. 5,549,974; pyrrolidines, U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,525,735 and 5,519,134; morpholino compounds, U.S. Pat. No. 5,506,337; benzodiazepines, 5,288,514, and the like).

Devices for the preparation of combinatorial libraries are commercially available (see, e.g., 357 MPS, 390 MPS (Advanced Chem. Tech, Louisville Ky.), Symphony (Rainin, Woburn, Mass.), 433A (Applied Biosystems, Foster City, Calif.), 9050 Plus (Millipore, Bedford, Mass.)). In addition, numerous combinatorial libraries are themselves commercially available (see, e.g., ComGenex, Princeton, N.J.; Tripos, Inc., St. Louis, Mo.; 3D Pharmaceuticals, Exton, Pa.; Martek Biosciences; Columbia, Md.; etc.).

In one aspect of the invention, the T2R modulators can be used in any food product, confectionery, pharmaceutical composition, or ingredient thereof to thereby modulate the taste of the product, composition, or ingredient in a desired manner. For instance, T2R modulators that enhance bitter taste sensation can be added to provide a bitter taste to a product or composition, while T2R modulators which block bitter taste sensations can be added to block the bitter taste of a product or composition.

Use of Compounds Identified by the Invention

Compounds identified according to the invention may be added to foods, beverages or medicinal compositions to modulate, preferably block bitter taste triggered by activation of the subject hT2R50 sequences and potentially other hT2R5 by bitter compounds, e.g., pyrazine compounds and other bitter compounds. For example, compounds that block activation of hT2R50 or related compounds may be used as additives in medicinals to block the bitter taste associated with drugs that activate the hT2R50 taste receptor. For example, these compounds may be added to pediatric medicinals preparations that contain such drug or in an amount effective to inhibit bitter taste associated therewith.

Compounds that block activation of hT2R50 can be used in foods, beverages or medicinals products to block the bitter taste of compounds that activate these receptor, e.g., pyrazines and structurally related compounds.

Kits

T2R genes and their homologs are useful tools for identifying taste receptor cells, for forensics and paternity determinations, and for examining taste transduction. T2R family member-specific reagents that specifically hybridize to T2R nucleic acids, such as T2R probes and primers, and T2R

specific reagents that specifically bind to a T2R protein, e.g., T2R antibodies are used to examine taste cell expression and taste transduction regulation.

Nucleic acid assays for the presence of DNA and RNA for a T2R family member in a sample include numerous techniques are known to those skilled in the art, such as southern analysis, northern analysis, dot blots, RNase protection, S1 analysis, amplification techniques such as PCR, and in situ hybridization. In in situ hybridization, for example, the target nucleic acid is liberated from its cellular surroundings in such as to be available for hybridization within the cell while preserving the cellular morphology for subsequent interpretation and analysis. The following articles provide an overview of the art of in situ hybridization: Singer et al., Biotechniques, 4:230250 (1986); Haase et al., Methods in Virology, vol. VII, 189-226 (1984); and Names et al., eds., Nucleic Acid Hybridization: A Practical Approach (1987). In addition, a T2R protein can be detected with the various immunoassay techniques described above. The test sample is typically compared to both a positive control (e.g., a sample expressing a recombinant T2R protein) and a negative control.

The present invention also provides for kits for screening for modulators of T2R family members. Such kits can be prepared from readily available materials and reagents. For example, such kits can comprise any one or more of the following materials: T2R nucleic acids or proteins, reaction tubes, and instructions for testing T2R activity. Optionally, the kit contains a functional T2R polypeptide. A wide variety of kits and components can be prepared according to the present invention, depending upon the intended user of the kit and the particular needs of the user.

Having now generally described the invention, the same will be more readily understood by reference to the following examples, which are provided by way of illustration and are not intended as limiting. It is understood that various modifications and changes can be made to the herein disclosed exemplary embodiments without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

EXAMPLE

Functional Assay Revealing that the Subject hT2R50 Haplotype is Functional and Responds to Specific Bitter Ligands as the Previously Identified hT2R50 Allele

hT2R50 (also called hT2R45 or hTas2R45 in literature) is a member of the human bitter taste receptor family. Previous publications and patent applications including the above-referenced Adler patent applications only revealed haplotypes encoding a short version of the protein. The present inventors herein report the identification of a new haplotype encoding a longer version of the protein. Furthermore, we show in this example that both the long and short version of the protein recognize 2 structurally related bitter molecules in functional assay experiments whereas control hT2R5 do not, indicating that hT2R50 is a taste receptor for at least these 2 bitter molecules.

The nucleotide and protein sequence of a new hT2R50 haplotype identified herein is contained in FIG. 1 and the Sequence Listing that precedes the claims. It can be seen therefrom that the longer (haplotype) version of the hT2R50 protein (referred to as hT2R50L) contained in FIG. 1 has extra 10 amino acids relative to be originally identified hT2R50 allele (these residues are bolded and underlined) which are added to its C-terminal end compared to the originally reported haplotypes (hT2R50), as illustrated in FIG. 2.

As shown in FIG. 2 the extended C-terminal sequence of hT2R50L is highly homologous to or the same as other closely related hT2R5 such as hT2R61, 64, and 75. The available genetic analysis to date suggests that the relative frequency of the hT2R50L allele is estimated to be 46%. This is based on the inventors' sequencing data from 24 individuals (about 50% European and 50% Asian heritage).

Using the in vitro assay described below, we found that the hT2R50 haplotype recognizes and responds to 2 structurally related bitter molecules, 2-acetylpyrazine and ethylpyrazine. These results are shown in FIG. 3. Both of these pyrazine compounds taste bitter to human at a concentration of about 5 mM. The same in vitro assays showed that both the short and long version of hT2R50 can respond to the bitter molecules, while closely related hT2R75 and 61 showed no response (FIG. 4).

hT2R50 Assay Conditions

Activation of the novel hT2R50 haplotype herein and other hT2R5 is measured in a cell-based assay detecting changes in

intracellular calcium concentration. In brief, human embryonic kidney cells are seeded in 48-well tissue culture plates. 24 hours later, the cells are transiently transfected with a plasmid containing the hT2R50 haplotype or another hT2R nucleic acid sequence, and a plasmid containing a chimeric G protein (G16gust44). Another 24 hours later, the cells are incubated with a fluorescent dye specific for calcium (Fluo-4; Molecular Probes) that provides a fast, simple and reliable fluorescence-based method for detecting changes in calcium concentration inside the cell. Activation of the T2R elicits a signaling cascade, which leads to the activation of PLC and a subsequent increase in intracellular calcium concentration. This increase in calcium concentration changes the fluorescence properties of the calcium dye inside the cells. These changes are monitored using fluorescence microscopy.

While the specification has described several embodiments of the present invention, it is to be understood that the above description is illustrative only and not limiting of the disclosed invention. The invention is to be limited only by the claims which follow.

SEQUENCE LISTING

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 35 40 45
 Thr Ala Leu Ala Val Ser Arg Val Gly Leu Leu Trp Val Leu Leu Leu
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 Asn Trp Tyr Ser Thr Val Leu Asn Pro Ala Phe Cys Ser Val Glu Leu
 65 70 75 80
 Arg Thr Thr Ala Tyr Asn Ile Trp Ala Val Thr Gly His Phe Ser Asn
 85 90 95
 Trp Pro Ala Thr Ser Leu Ser Ile Phe Tyr Leu Leu Lys Ile Ala Asn
 100 105 110
 Phe Ser Asn Leu Ile Phe Leu Arg Leu Lys Arg Arg Val Lys Ser Val
 115 120 125
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 260 265 270
 Ser Ala His Pro Phe Ile Leu Ile Trp Gly Asn Lys Lys Leu Lys Gln
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 20 25

The invention claimed is:

1. A method of identifying a compound that putatively enhances, inhibits, or elicits bitter taste in a human subject comprising (i) screening one or more compounds in a screening assay which identifies compounds that specifically bind to or inhibit the specific binding of a ligand to a human T2R50 polypeptide, wherein said T2R50 polypeptide comprises a polypeptide sequence having the sequence in SEQ ID NO:3 or a variant thereof that possessing at least 99% sequence identity therewith and which contains at its carboxy-terminus the same 10 amino acids as the T2R50 polypeptide contained in SEQ ID NO:3 and (ii) identifying the compound as a compound that putatively enhances, inhibits, or elicits bitter taste in a human subject if the compound specifically binds to a T2R50 polypeptide possessing at least 99% sequence identity to the T2R50 polypeptide having the sequence in SEQ ID NO:3.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the human T2R50 polypeptide has the sequence of SEQ ID NO:3.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the T2R50 polypeptide is in solution.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the T2R50 polypeptide is attached to a solid phase.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the T2R50 polypeptide is in a lipid bilayer or vesicle.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the T2R50 polypeptide is an isolated polypeptide or is expressed by a cell.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the cell is a eukaryotic cell.

8. The method of claim 5 wherein the cell is a bacterial, yeast, amphibian or mammalian cell.

9. The method of claim 5 wherein the cell is a CHO, COS, HEK-293 cell or a Xenopus oocyte.

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10. The method of claim 1 wherein the binding of the compound is detected by assaying for changes in conformation of said T2R50 polypeptide.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein said changes are detected by NMR spectroscopy or fluorescence spectroscopy. 5

12. The method of claim 5 wherein the cell also expresses a G protein that functionally couples to said T2R50 polypeptide.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein said G protein is Galpha16, Galpha16 or gustducin. 10

14. The method of claim 1 wherein binding of said compound to said T2R50 polypeptide is detected using a fluorescently or radioactively labeled ligand.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein the method detects displacement of the labeled ligand from said T2R50 polypeptide by fluorescence polarization or a FRET assay.

16. The method of claim 12 wherein said G protein is a promiscuous G protein.

17. The assay of claim 1 wherein the assay for identifying a compound that putatively enhances, inhibits, or elicits bitter taste in a human subject comprises: i. screening a compound

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for its effect on the activation of said T2R50 polypeptide by a bitter ligand and ii. determining whether said compound modulates T2R50 associated bitter taste based on whether it has an effect on the activation of said receptor.

18. The assay of claim 17 which is a fluorimetric assay.

19. The assay of claim 17 which is a binding assay.

20. The assay of claim 17 which detects the effect on said compound by assaying its effect on an intracellular ion concentration.

21. The assay of claim 20 which detects the effect of said compound on intracellular sodium or calcium.

22. The assay of claim 17 which detects the effect of said compound on cell membrane potential.

23. The assay of claim 17 wherein said bitter ligand compound is selected based on its ability to block interaction of said taste receptor with a bitter ligand. 15

24. The assay of claim 17 which detects the effect of said compound on intracellular cAMP, cGMP or IP3.

25. The assay of claim 17 which is a fluorescence polarization assay. 20

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